Headlands Journal 1986-89

1986 Artists in Residence David Ireland Mark Thompson **Resource Artists** Jo Babcock Michael Bartlett Marcia Bisset Martha Bowling Phoebe Brookbank Machele Civey Nancy Clement Tim Collins Allen Graessle Patty Hutchinson Thomas Joseph Shereen Kaneshisa Arlene Linder John Matthias Ruby Newman Sono Osato Andrew Radcliffe Barbara Rhoades Nancy Selvin Ian Sutherland David Tallitsch Marguerite Thayer Pamela Underhill Katherine Wagner Sabina

Artists

Walla Kathleen Yapuncich Lisa Zukovsky **1987 Artists in Residence** Joanna Haigood Scot Halpin Bob Jones Ned Kahn Melissa Kwasny Jim Paul Mark Thompson **Resource Artists** Michael Bartlett Marcia Bisset Martha Bowling Phoebe Brookbank Jeff Brown Machele Civey Nancy Clement Wendy Eppinger Bruce Helmberger Patti Hutchinson Blake Jackson Rachel Johnson Thomas Joseph John Matthias Patricia Olynyk Sono Osato Barbara Rhoades Ian Sutherland Marguerite Thayer Katherine Wagner Sabina Walla Anthony White **1988 Artists in Residence** Tony Cragg Mie Preckler Hilda Shum Harvey Stein Kathryn Sylva Nina Wise **Resource Artists** Michael Bartlett Marcia Bisset Martha Bowling Phoebe Brookbank Jeff Brown Patricia Bulitt Machele Civey Shelley Cook Joyce Creswell Katherine Doyle Bruce Helmberger Patti Hutchinson Blake Jackson Rachel Johnson Nancy Legge Steve Lipke John Matthias Patricia Olynyk Sono Osato Nancy Raine Fran Snyder Diane Stemper Larry Sultan Ian Sutherland Marguerite Thayer Katherine Wagner Sabina Walla Anthony White **1989 Artists in Residence** Scott Alburger Max Below Jonas dos Santos Greacian Goeke Reiko Goto Susan Halpern Ann Hamilton Masumi Hayashi Kim Irwin Daniel Loewenstein Michael Lucas Howard Martin Paul DeMarinis Philip Paternite Sande Percival Rebecca Solnit Karyn Traut Tom Whiteside **Affiliate Artists** Ellery Jane Akers Melanie Beene Holly Blake Ann Chamberlain Agnes Charlesworth Shelley Cook David Dashiell Katherine Doyle Arienne Ellis Tom Ferentz Pat Ferrero Cinthea Fiss Bruce Helmberger Lynette Kessler Kathleen McGill Pat Murphy Alicia Nogueria Patricia Olynyk Dede Puma Nancy Raine William Scharf Susan Schwartzenberg Fran Snyder Larry Sultan Jeanne Tumpane Alan Weintraub Linde Van Buren Pamela Winfrey Rene Yung

Headlands Journal 1986-89

No one individual created Headlands Center for the Arts; various forces and circumstances of history shaped its beginnings. The idea of an art center emerged in 1982 from a lengthy public planning process conducted by the National Park Service. A small and rugged crew of Board members guided the Center's early years and hired its first staff members in 1986. Since then over 250 artists have worked with the Center through its various programs. Over the years, we have consciously worked to create a structure for discourse to guide our own decisions and to provide creative opportunities for both our audience and artists. We are building a constantly evolving organization whose quest is to better understand the interdependence of place, community and art. We investigate various cultural models and provide artists with opportunities to exercise new roles. Our grounding force and constant inspiration is the 13,000 acres of wild coastal hills and valleys that surround the Center.

This Journal is the first of what will be an annual effort to track the conversations and events that take place at the Center. Much of the work at the Center is experimental and fugitive: talks, performances and installations whose duration is brief. The Journal records most of these events, acknowledges linkages between them, and assembles them into a larger dialogue. The questions artists pose and the approaches they take at Headlands resonate beyond the community

Headlands Journal
volume one

published by Headlands Center for the Arts.
Covering the years 1986 - 1989
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The Center would like to acknowledge the good humored assistance of former Board and staff members who helped build the Center:

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that can physically get to the Center. While we always welcome visitors, we offer this first Journal as an invitation to our readers, however distant, to participate with us in a dialogue about the place of art in our culture and the roles artists play in shaping our future.

I would like to acknowledge the efforts of Ann Chamberlain who has had chief responsibility for editing the Journal. Thanks to Holly Blake for her hours of copy editing and proofreading as well as to our heroic transcribers, Melissa Howe and Britta Kathmeyer who spent days under the headphones bringing to text the words of our guest speakers. Finally, the Journal owes its existence to the support of its funders: The Osher Foundation, Mary and David Robinson, The Fireman's Fund Foundation, The San Francisco Foundation, The National Endowment for the Arts and The Marin Community Foundation.

Jennifer Dowley July 1991

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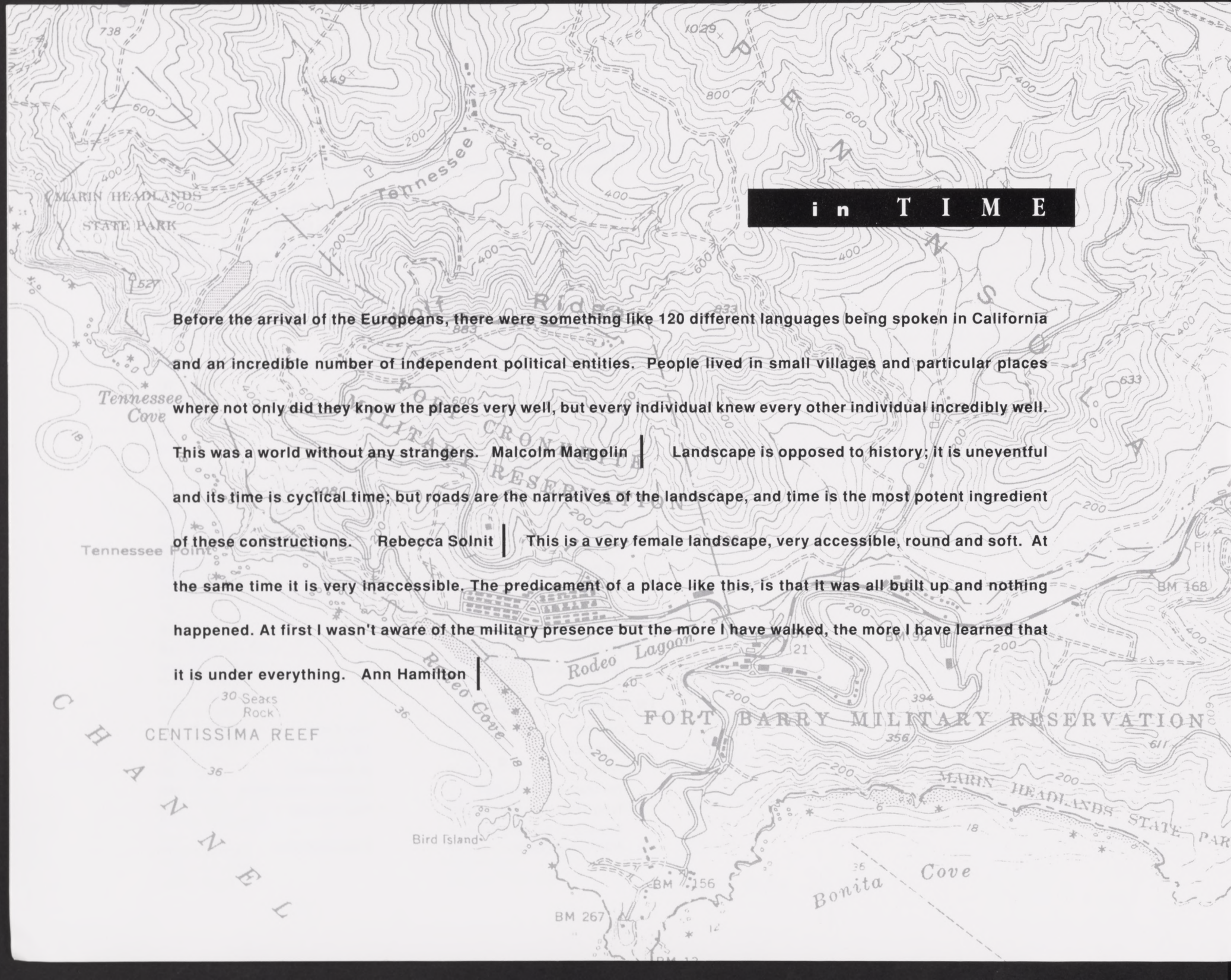


in TIME

Before the arrival of the Europeans, there were something like 120 different languages being spoken in California and an incredible number of independent political entities. People lived in small villages and particular places where not only did they know the places very well, but every individual knew every other individual incredibly well. This was a world without any strangers. Malcolm Margolin | Landscape is opposed to history; it is uneventful and its time is cyclical time; but roads are the narratives of the landscape, and time is the most potent ingredient of these constructions. Rebecca Solnit | This is a very female landscape, very accessible, round and soft. At the same time it is very inaccessible. The predicament of a place like this, is that it was all built up and nothing happened. At first I wasn't aware of the military presence but the more I have walked, the more I have learned that it is under everything. Ann Hamilton |

Headlands Center for the Arts came out of the climate of the 1960's and 70's in the Bay Area. It was a time of experimentation. There was a sense that we were out of the way, an outpost, and it didn't matter what you did so you might as well have a good time. For us "frontier" meant that people depended very much on one another. There wasn't competition among individuals, so people would take time out to play, rather than produce a consistent body of work that a dealer might want. The Museum of Conceptual Art developed among a certain circle of artists. Those of us involved with those events really learned from one another. David Ireland was exploring the whole meaning of a gallery, and the idea of the space itself being the art, not just a container for art. What was happening on the East coast was much more European. What these guys were doing was the last of the "male frontier".

There was an awareness of land and a desire to live on the land rather than in the city. Bonnie Sherk created The Farm in the Mission, which took a farm and put it in a city, drawing attention to the quality of life in cities. The Los Angeles Women's Building and the guerrilla performance activities were very much tied in with feminism. The women in Los Angeles, including Suzanne Lacy, questioned social structures in very active, political kinds of ways. This fed into more current ideas about public art, embracing gender, new systems of thinking. All of these issues really questioned the commodity-display, object-making context.

A range of alternative art programs and departments occurred at San Francisco State University including Conceptual Design with Bryan Rogers and the Center for Experimental and Interdisciplinary Arts with Jock Reynolds, which fostered off-campus experiments in Tiburon and later here at the Headlands. The idea was that artistic exploration needs a place to enter into dialogue both with the physicality of the world and with other people.

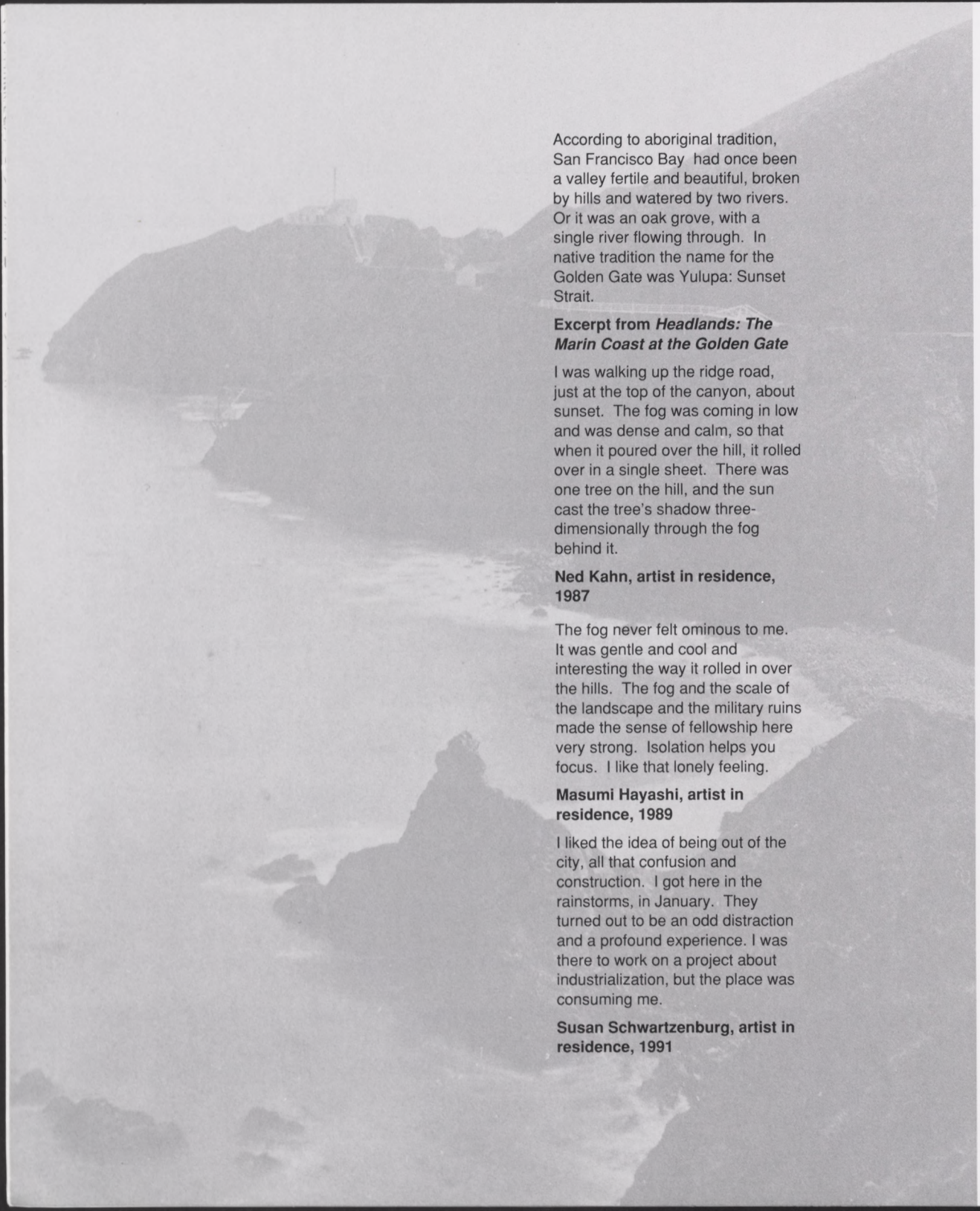
There also has been a continued interest at the Headlands and in the Bay Area in other cultures' ways of dealing with the landscape that are models of how to live harmoniously with nature. What the Headlands has tried to do is get to a much greater source of power, a real sense of spirituality not spoken about in the art world. It's really about a slight removal: the artist as citizen and the way their vision effects a wide range of actions, not in the tradition of making objects that look like art or even things that have the imprimatur of the art gesture about them.

Jim Melchert and Leonard Hunter, Artists, Board of Directors, Headlands Center for the Arts. Conversation, April 1990

Our situation in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, with a western exposure to the Pacific Ocean, makes us acutely aware of the natural cycles of time, of which our time is only a short moment. This relationship to nature has defined our sense of who and what we are; our dependence on the larger forces that surround us. The Headlands is the gatekeeper to the Pacific and all that it brings culturally and socially: the distance from and proximity to San Francisco; the rhythm of reflection which natural systems induce.

The Center is the location, the place and the physical site of the Headlands, and we are also the ideas, thoughts, and images that have emerged or have been nurtured at the Headlands. Octavio Paz says, "A society is defined as much by how it comes to terms with its past as by its attitude toward the future. Its memories are no less revealing than its aims."

From its inception, the Headlands has focused on the natural and cultural history of this area. One of the Center's first projects was to commission a guidebook to the Headlands. The Golden Gate National Recreation Area had no single document that recorded the successive presence of the Miwok, Mexican ranches, Portuguese farms, the U.S. Army and its current steward the National Park Service. Five artists, Miles De Coster, Mark Klett, Paul Metcalf, Mike Mandel and Larry Sultan were commissioned to research and document this history. The final result was assembled in the book, *Headlands: The Marin Coast at the Golden Gate,* published in 1989. Many of the stories, interviews and observations that follow have been taken from that book.



According to aboriginal tradition, San Francisco Bay had once been a valley fertile and beautiful, broken by hills and watered by two rivers. Or it was an oak grove, with a single river flowing through. In native tradition the name for the Golden Gate was Yulupa: Sunset Strait.

Excerpt from *Headlands: The Marin Coast at the Golden Gate*

I was walking up the ridge road, just at the top of the canyon, about sunset. The fog was coming in low and was dense and calm, so that when it poured over the hill, it rolled over in a single sheet. There was one tree on the hill, and the sun cast the tree's shadow three-dimensionally through the fog behind it.

Ned Kahn, artist in residence, 1987

The fog never felt ominous to me. It was gentle and cool and interesting the way it rolled in over the hills. The fog and the scale of the landscape and the military ruins made the sense of fellowship here very strong. Isolation helps you focus. I like that lonely feeling.

Masumi Hayashi, artist in residence, 1989

I liked the idea of being out of the city, all that confusion and construction. I got here in the rainstorms, in January. They turned out to be an odd distraction and a profound experience. I was there to work on a project about industrialization, but the place was consuming me.

Susan Schwartzenburg, artist in residence, 1991

The Headlands remains today as an accretionary wedge stacked against and beneath what was the leading edge of the continental plate. As it converged with the continental plate, most of the oceanic crust, being denser and heavier, plunged back into the mantle - that is, it was subducted. Much of the sediment derived ultimately by erosion from the land surface acted as the lubricant between the overriding continental plate and the subducting oceanic crust.

During the ice ages of the Pleistocene, the shoreline was on the other side of the Farallons and San Francisco Bay was a dry valley. When the glaciers melted, the sea rose to its present level, flooding San Francisco Bay and the lower ends of Rodeo and Tennessee Valleys, which first were narrow bays and are now lagoons. The broad flat valley floors underlain by thick deposits of alluvium are a product of this sea-level rise.

Over a period of thousands of years, rising seas flooded though the river-carved gorge at the Golden Gate and occupied an inland valley to create San Francisco Bay. Thus the successive action of the river and the ocean created the only complete breach in the Coast Range which borders the Pacific for most of California's length. As a result, the San Francisco Bay region is the meeting place of continental and oceanic air masses. Through the funnel of the Golden Gate and San Francisco Bay the immense aerial forces of sea and land wage a continual war, and the tide of battle flows back and forth. Probably no comparable area on earth displays as many varieties of weather simultaneously as the region around San Francisco Bay.

Harold Gilliam is a naturalist and writer who has specialized in the natural history of the Bay Area. Excerpt from *Headlands: The Marin Coast at the Golden Gate.*

Lawrence C. Binford of California Academy of Sciences noticed raptors migrating past his office window at the east end of Golden Gate Park San Francisco for several years. Studying the contour maps and following their flight, he traced them to the highest hill in the Marin Headlands, Hill 129, the last of the great coastal artillery batteries in the Headlands.

"In September of 1972, I visited Hill 129 and was rewarded with 162 individuals of 10 species of raptors. [The Marin Headlands was] still under military control and the hilltop was in the line of fire from the rifle range where practices were regularly held, not an ideal spot for bird watching."

"Emanating from as far north as Alaska following the valleys between mountain ranges, to take advantage of the larger wind patterns and the local warm air currents - the thermals - that rise from the valley floors along the mountain sides, the migrating hawks are funnelled naturally into the Marin Headlands. Disliking open water, they come to 129 with the bay to the east, the ocean to the west of the San Francisco Peninsula, little more than a mile ahead. Here the bird hesitates, picks up a thermal rising from the waters edge along the southern slope of 129, circles, soars, and rises up, tail spread, wings extended, to the peak of the current's lift, then, closing tail, tucking wings to body, dives at an angle, as though shot from the rifle range at his back for the San Francisco shore and the next thermal, to continue the journey southward."

Hill 129, or as ornithologists now have it, Hawk Hill, is the single major hawk lookout point in all of western North America.

Excerpt from *Headlands: The Marin Coast at the Golden Gate*

I learned where birds like to hang out and where they don't like to hang out. If there's water around, that's great. If there's another animal around, that's not so great. You could tell when a hawk was nearby, because there'd be no little birds. I whistled with the birds often, but I realized that it's easy to project onto birdsong. Sometimes I would try to communicate for a while, and then think, this bird is probably calling some other bird for lunch.

Scott Alburger, artist in residence, 1989

Hawk watching on Hill 129

Malcolm Margolin: In California before the arrival of the Europeans, there were something like 120 different languages being spoken and an incredible number of independent political entities. People lived in small villages and particular places where not only did they know the places very well, but every individual knew every other individual extremely well.

This was a world without any strangers. You knew everything about each other: you really knew each others' souls. You were born into the village and the people you knew when they were little would be the people who you would grow old with. The small village demanded a kind of social conformity, because you were related to various people and were known by people and because your place was established within the family, the village, and clan: yet it also gave everyone a peculiar kind of freedom.

And there are real characters in these Indian villages, so and so who is a singer, and so and so who makes pots and pans and so and so who lies, and so and so who has been talking to himself for twenty years, and this goes on and on. I think there is a much greater range of character that this allows for than in a culture such as ours in which nobody knows anyone and consequently we have to present ourselves as very alike, so no one thinks we are hostile to one another.

Jim Melchert: I was wondering if you ever got the sense of how far they traveled?

Malcolm Margolin: There was a wonderful story by an Indian woman translated around the turn of the century. When she was young, she lived with her aunt who lived in such and such a village and then she got married and she went to her husband's village to live and then they had a kid and they moved further up along the river, and then she didn't like this place, so they moved to some other place; and she named something like twenty different places where she had lived. And then she sat back with utter satisfaction and said, "I'm not like these other people who stay in one place all their lives - I've seen the world." And if you traced it on a map, she never got more than seven miles outside her village. I mean you can go from San Francisco to Boston and feel at home, but back then, if you went up the ridge there was a different sense to the land and a different sense to the everything that was there. Land was so cherished through myth, story and human association that every place you went had its own qualities, its own text.

They were living in a world in which certain things overhear you, a rock over there remembers who passed it and it has a kind of intelligence, power and history. The landscape is charged with these types of things that contain history over generations. We think of deer as a singular unit, we say there are 80 deer on the meadow, plural or singular, language pushes our mind into that. But deerness has this kind of mythic history, as a unit, and if a man went out to hunt deer, there were scruples about this kind of entity. It wasn't a single act of a single individual hunting a single deer, for [he believed] that if he screwed up one time the deerness would remember and the deer would not come to him that way. Religion was mixed in with a whole way of seeing things and of being human. Anything they had was made of something that was living or once had been removed from the living. Tules, wood, you were really aware of the movement of light and the dark and the changing seasons, the feathers from the birds, everything you were using was connected - it was much more living in an organic world.

Malcolm Margolin and Jim Melchert, in conversation at Headlands, May 17, 1989. *Malcolm Margolin*, author of *The Ohlone Way*, is publisher of *News from Native California*, a magazine which provides a forum for political, social and cultural issues of Native Californians.

The first peoples to enter what its now California from the north, arrived some 10,000 years ago. The Miwok of the Penutian family were among the several tribes that followed. They settled the Marin area perhaps 5,000 years ago. The Penutians have been linked by some linguists with the Maya.

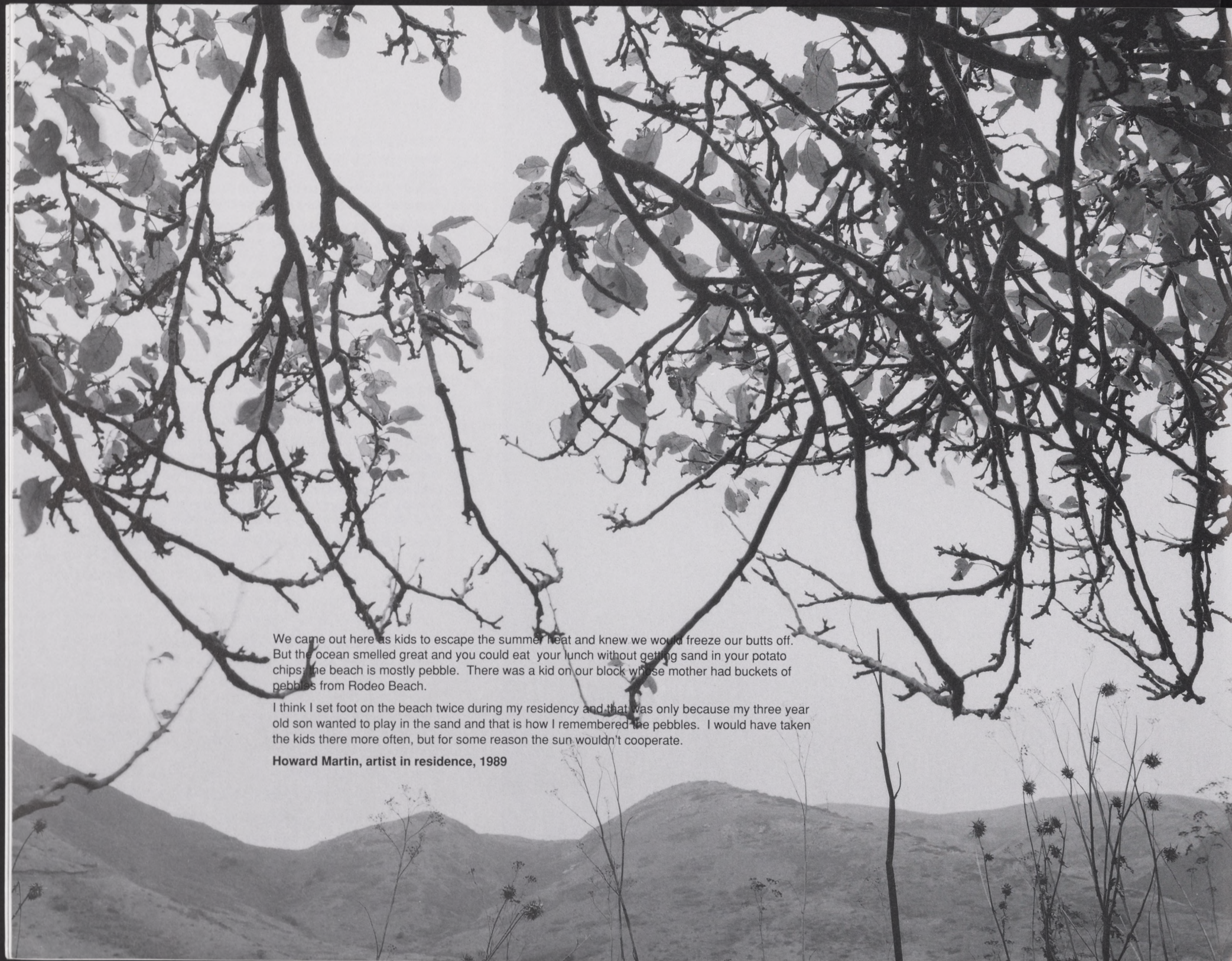
According to Miwok legend, when people die they go west to be with coyote. The dead go toward Point Reyes and go down there. They say there is a little chunk of wood there, which they use to make a fire. A piece of rock about two feet long is at the spot where they jump into the ocean and then follow a road back of the breakers.

With a permanent settlement near present-day Sausalito, the Coast Miwok hunted and fished the Headlands. But the staple of their diet was acorns - from the tan oak, black oak, and blue oak. Marine foods were important. Surf fish were caught in a circular dip net ; Bay fish, in a seine strung between two tule balsas. Only for bullhead was a line with a gorge used. Steelhead and salmon were taken during winter runs.

The archeology indicated that, over a period of unnumbered centuries "[The Miwok] had achieved something quite rare in human history: a way of life that gave them peace and stability, not just for a generation or two, not just for a century, but probably for thousands of years." The goal of each successive tribal chief was to not lose ground: to "stay where we are."

Excerpt from *Headlands: The Marin Coast at the Golden Gate*

Shell midden, Marin Headlands



We came out here as kids to escape the summer heat and knew we would freeze our butts off. But the ocean smelled great and you could eat your lunch without getting sand in your potato chips. The beach is mostly pebble. There was a kid on our block whose mother had buckets of pebbles from Rodeo Beach.

I think I set foot on the beach twice during my residency and that was only because my three year old son wanted to play in the sand and that is how I remembered the pebbles. I would have taken the kids there more often, but for some reason the sun wouldn't cooperate.

Howard Martin, artist in residence, 1989

In 1822, the British schooner *Orion* arrived at the bay and the first mate, William Anthony Richardson, was sent ashore to secure water, beef, and firewood. Arriving at the Presidio, he found an entertainment underway and the host, Governor de Sola, welcomed the young Englishman. Richardson danced with the governor's daughter, Maria, and decided to stay. The *Orion* went sailing off without him.

De Sola seemed delighted with his new guest as was his daughter, Maria. In less than a year, Richardson was baptized into the Catholic faith and became Guillermo Antonio Richardson. In due course, he received Mexican citizenship and in May 1825, celebrated his marriage to Maria. He was described by contemporaries as "full of Mexican authority and Anglo-Saxon enterprise." In 1838, Richardson was determined to secure his position by taking up ranching, and he applied to the Mexican authorities for a grant of land, some 19,000 acres on the Marin peninsula from the bay to the ocean, from the Headlands to Mount Tamalpais. It took three years for Richardson to acquire political possession of his lands. In 1841, accompanied by his wife and children, the Alcade from Sonoma and two witnesses took symbolic possession by pulling up clumps of grass, breaking the branches of the trees or bushes, and throwing rocks in the four cardinal directions, thus indicating that he, as the owner, could do things to the land that would not be permitted to another.

Once he acquired his ranch, Richardson imported some Mexican cattle and they brought with them Mexican grass seeds, stuck in their fur and hair. These took root and spread, replacing some of the native grasses. This may have been the first of what has come over the years to be an onslaught of invasion. The first farmers, Portuguese and others, looked on the grasslands as being perfect for cattle - but the heavy grazing badly damaged the perennials. Accordingly, annual grasses were imported from Mediterranean sources. Other seeds arrived in cattle droves, old mattresses, etc.

Excerpt from *Headlands: The Marin Coast at the Golden Gate*.

"When we were kids we'd climb over the hill and come down the canyon by Sam Silva's ranch. We'd go down to the beach and hunt for agates. Then we'd come by the ranch again and we'd always have milk to drink. Sam always let us drink all the milk that we wanted to. Us kids used to really drink that milk, after being out there at the beach all day. We loaded ourselves. Generally we'd hike up the canyon, but when we had a belly full of milk we went up the dirt road instead. We just couldn't take it, hiking up that steep hill like that, with all that milk in us."

"The reason Sam was so good to us, I mean we weren't destructive kids or anything, was I think because we'd find his calves stuck down in the creeks and us kids would always pull them, the calves, out of the creek. And he always appreciated that."

Casius Poole, Sausalito resident, grew up in the 1920's with the Marin Headlands as his playground. Excerpt from *Headlands: The Marin Coast at the Golden Gate*

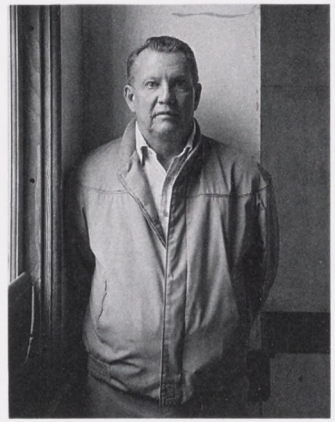
In the late 19th century, modern seacoast weapons with greatly increased range and power caused the defenses of San Francisco and its harbor to be shifted westward from the inner Bay to the Marin Headlands. The Headlands became the site of a series of heavy "Endicott System" seacoast defenses built between 1901 and 1905.

On July 16, 1904, the Secretary of War authorized construction of a permanent post naming the new post "Fort Barry" in honor of Brigadier General William Farquhar Barry. Fort Barry was a small post consisting of two barracks or dormitories (now the Headlands Center for the Arts), a hospital (the youth hostel), headquarters (Building 940), and officers' quarters which line the parade grounds. For the construction of the barracks Buildings 944 and 945, the original contract called for the bulk of the lumber for framing and sheathing to be Washington or Oregon pine, and the lumber for the inside and outside finish to be redwood. The upper floors of the barracks were to be maple because redwood had an unsatisfactory wearing ability.

The first Coast Artillery Company which manned the coastal defense batteries to the west of the fort did not arrive until 1908. Without a permanent garrison from 1921 until 1939, Fort Barry was reactivated in 1939, and a regimental chapel was built. During World War II, all of the Fort Barry buildings were used to their capacity.

In the fall of 1946, the last coast artillery troops left Fort Barry. In the 1950's, Fort Barry was the location of Nike Air Defense Missile Site 88L. The barracks were used by missilemen and military police. Following the removal of the Nike missiles in 1974, the Army's use of the area declined further until the only use of the area was by troops of the Army Reserve in Buildings 944 and 945, and the family housing used by the Active Army.

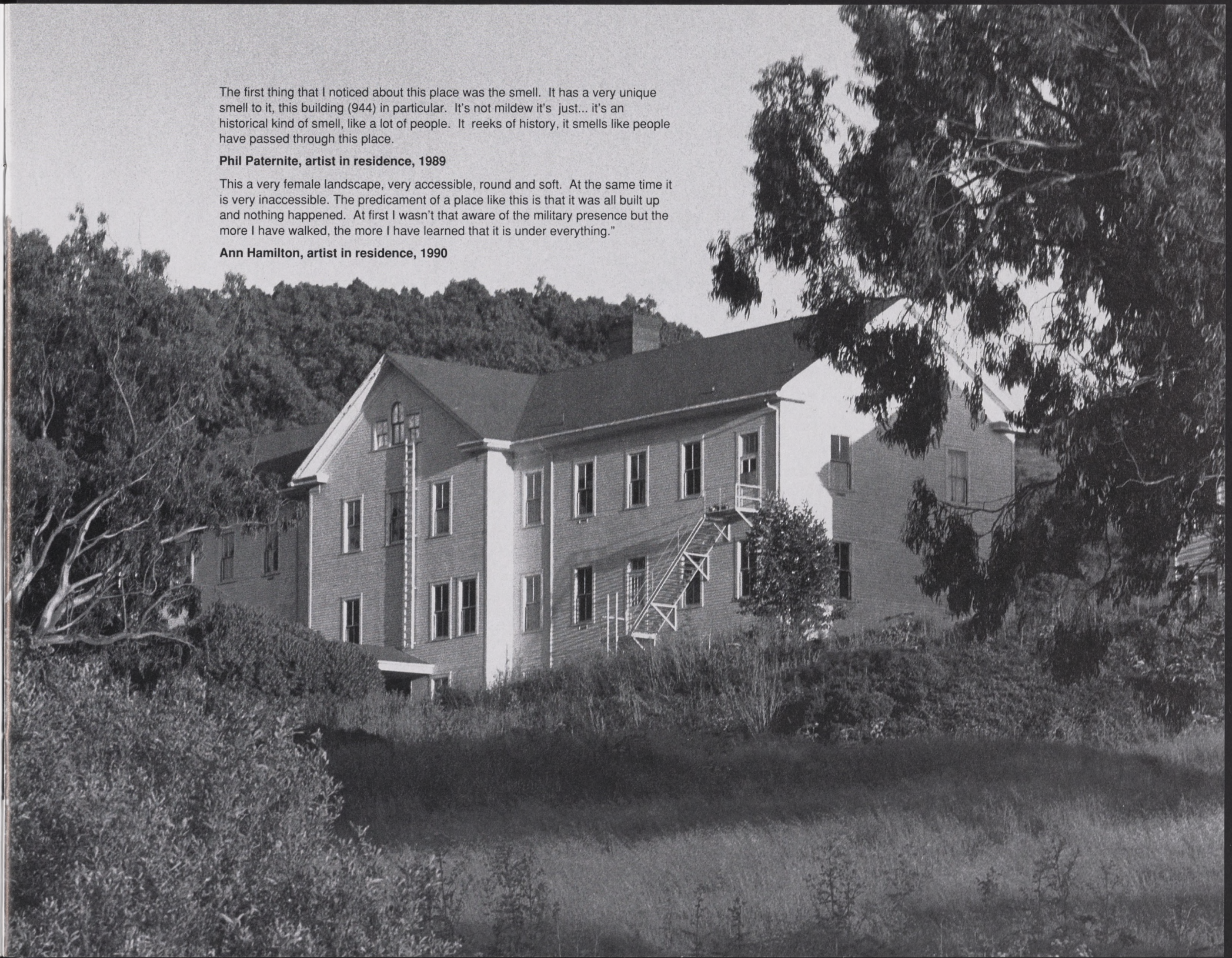
Colonel Milton B. Halsey, Executive Director, Fort Point and the Presidio Historical Association.



Kent Williams was drafted into the army in 1952, took basic training at Fort Ord and, following an aptitude test, was assigned to Fort Barry for combat military police training. He arrived in February 1953, during the Korean War.

There were four platoons in each building, 944 and 945. I was in 945, fourth platoon, third floor, east end. About thirty-five of us comprised each platoon. The day started at 5 A.M. being awakened via the 'bitch box' - an intercom system wired to each platoon controlled from the orderly room - with records by Glenn Miller, Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey, etc. played at FULL volume. The cadre men ran down the halls into our rooms yelling 'Is everybody happy?' We bailed out of our sacks and dressed rapidly in order to assemble in front of each building to be double-timed down the hill, in the dark, to the 'Y' at Bunker Rd. and back to our barracks and given our breakfast schedule - first and third platoons first or whatever - and received at the same time orders on the uniform of the day, which varied as to the day's activity - field or classroom and, of course, the weather. If you ate first you went directly to the messhall. If you were on the second feeding shift you made your bunk, prepared your uniform and equipment and 'shit, showered, and shaved.'

Kent Williams. Excerpt from *Headlands: The Marin Coast at the Golden Gate*.



The first thing that I noticed about this place was the smell. It has a very unique smell to it, this building (944) in particular. It's not mildew it's just... it's an historical kind of smell, like a lot of people. It reeks of history, it smells like people have passed through this place.

Phil Paternite, artist in residence, 1989

This a very female landscape, very accessible, round and soft. At the same time it is very inaccessible. The predicament of a place like this is that it was all built up and nothing happened. At first I wasn't that aware of the military presence but the more I have walked, the more I have learned that it is under everything."

Ann Hamilton, artist in residence, 1990

One day this summer I drove from San Francisco to Flagstaff, and on the side of the road about halfway there I saw something monumentally perplexing, something either disconcerting in its irony or terribly enchanting. It was a truck, a huge many wheeled freight truck whose massive steel side bore in black letters the towering inscription ARCADIAN. Now Arcadia, we all know, is a gentle primitive land in which intellectual shepherds compose poetry during long golden afternoons. It seems safe to assume that there are no diesel semis in Arcadia and yet I saw this rumbling enigma while I was in my own American Arcadia, the Arcadia of being on the road on an afternoon of crystalline desert light.

I like the way roads mediate landscape, and some of my fondest memories are of drives down long rural roads, romantic drives in which the conversation meandered as much as the route, and I was free to look out the window, solitary drives in which the great pleasure was matching the turns of the wheels to the curves of the roads: one perfect local summer drive with a bag of cherries in my lap and all the chestnut trees and bright pink hedge roses in bloom, steering with one hand, swallowing the fruit and tossing out the pits as I passed down long tunnels of green formed by overhanging trees, around sudden bends that opened up entirely different prospects, over hills whose gold seemed concentrated in the bright yellow divider line. Landscape is opposed to history; it is uneventful and its time is cyclical time; but roads are the narratives of the landscape and time is the most potent ingredient of these constructions.

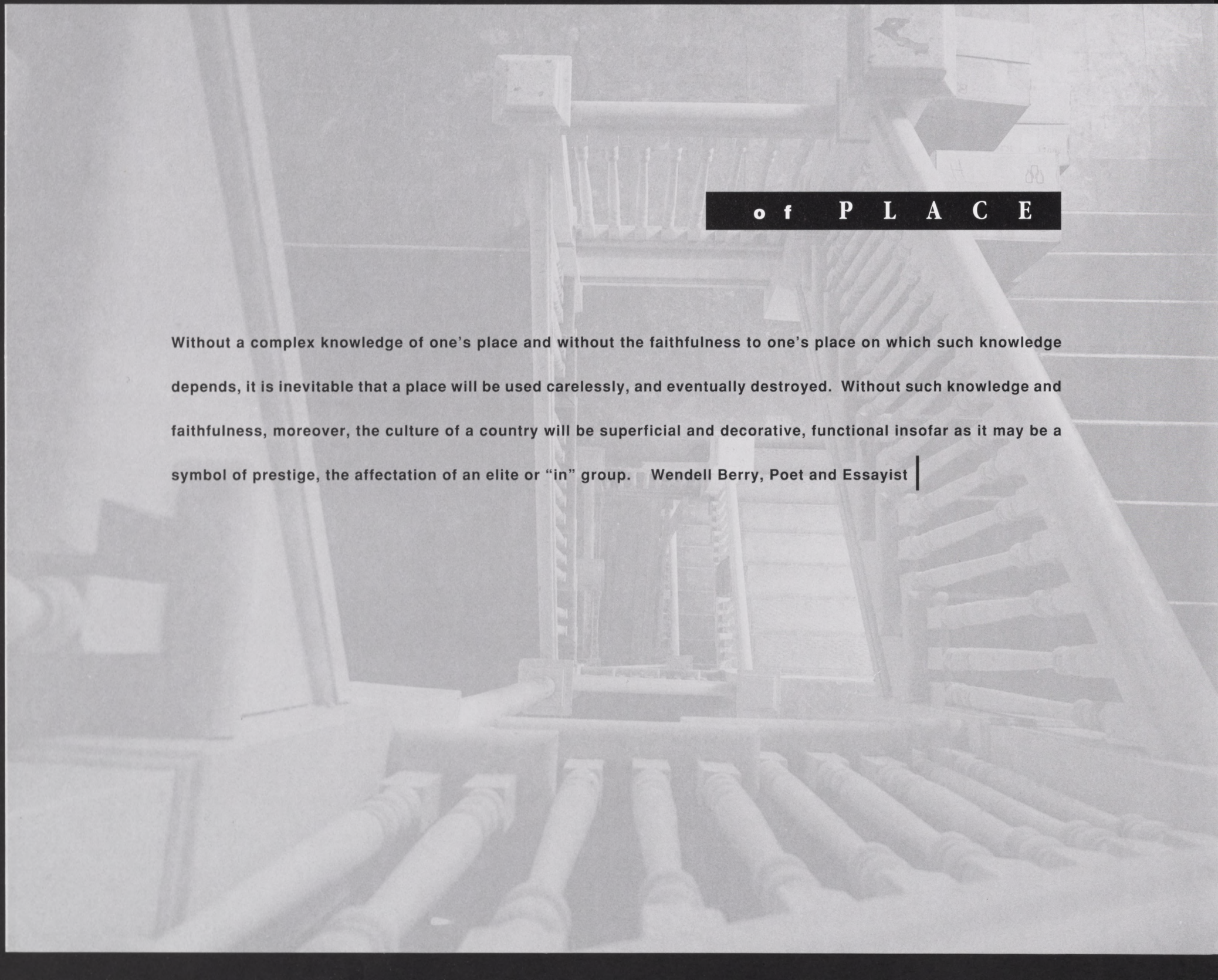
When we build, we build places, except for roads, which are less places than promises. A place is about here and now, a road is about there and later. Roads, then, are the architecture of civilization's restlessness, of those who wish neither to stay in their built places nor wander in the untouched ones, but to move from place to place. A road promises something else (though restlessness is better appeased by traveling than arriving) and a road that ends without taking us to one is a broken promise. Even so, the road is an event in itself, as well as the ribbon that ties two places together, and the fact that a road can be described as an event indicates how roads differ from other structures. Only over time does the full shape of the road become apparent, and its slow revelation is what fascinates me. The road is a real place, but also a metaphor for time, for future becoming present and then past, for passage.

A road that travels over hills is a long sequence of geometrical variations that describe the landscape it runs through, of s- and c- curves, rises and dips, bends, disappearances, distant reemergings, of a perpetual serpentine writhing in response to the contours that came before. In our heads and on maps a road is a line drawn through the landscape, but its foreground appears to the eye as a kind of mouth eternally gaping wide to swallow up as we plunge into the beyond, a V that widens to wrap around us, a road is a snake.

Roads are not only the major accomplishment of the American spirit of manifest destiny, but its principal expression. Roads are evidence of dissatisfaction, and America was founded upon that quality, upon the belief that there was better than here, that problems could be run away from, that freedom was geographical, that being swallowed by the snake will set us free. Restlessness is the quintessential characteristic, the explanation of the curious optimism and short attention span, the drifting and the driving of Americans. Roads are the first incursion into a wilderness, the one that makes all the rest possible, though to a reassuring extent, many of the roads haven't been followed by houses, diners, cattle, cities. A government agency defined wilderness as any area of more than a hundred thousand acres containing no roads usable by the public. Roads render permanent someone else's notion of negotiating territory, and to follow a road is to accept an interpretation.

Even so, ever since I learned to drive, the long-distance signs on freeways have held a peculiar allure for me. They hold out the possibility of abandoning the daily round of duties and burdens, of being free and anonymous and lost, a temporary solution unless one keeps moving. "The end of the road is simply the beginning of another journey," says a wilderness magazine's ad for four-wheel drives, promising to postpone the inevitable. Lewis Hyde contrasts the ties of community with the freedom of strangers: "In this old lovers' quarrel between liberty and community, Westerners are those who defend freedom and long for attachment." In the typical country song, a man is driving his Studebaker away from a bad marriage, toward the lights of town; or else he's working in the car factory in Detroit, all alone and pining for his home in the mountains. The truck drivers who figure so largely in these songs are a perfect image of commodity incarnate; free as a bird and lonesome. Given the choice, we choose the road. If our own flawed and hopeful Arcadia is the road, then the real consummation is in traveling, arrival the disenchantment.

Rebecca Solnit, artist in residence, 1989



# of PLACE

Without a complex knowledge of one's place and without the faithfulness to one's place on which such knowledge depends, it is inevitable that a place will be used carelessly, and eventually destroyed. Without such knowledge and faithfulness, moreover, the culture of a country will be superficial and decorative, functional insofar as it may be a symbol of prestige, the affectation of an elite or "in" group. Wendell Berry, Poet and Essayist

David Ireland: The beauty of the work I did at the Headlands was that the organization itself was forming. The work I was doing became kind of a metaphor, it stood for something that the Headlands wanted to be about - and partly that was the unknown.

Ann Chamberlain: There seems to be a lot of attention by the design community in your work... imitations as well. How do you feel about this appropriation?

DI: We went in without thinking about design. I was looking at it purely as a response to the spirit of the place and materials. I just put the shiny stuff on. When designers work, they take new surfaces and treat them to look like they're old, so there is a full treatment going on. It makes me want to work further away, push on. However that manifests itself will undoubtedly become seized by the design community again.

AC: For you, there's a logic to what you are doing. It is not the appearance. It is the inner investigation that you follow, whereas for designers it's the surface that's of interest.

DI: As a conceptual artist, you accept or reject all within your concept of what you get. You want to do a particular investigation and the investigation proves that this is what you get.

AC: So it is almost like setting up an experiment.

DI: Exactly, that is a good analogy. You set up the ingredients, you mix things together. If you do not like it, you can throw it out. But you do get a result. As a designer you may use a reference. Your references are security. It's like the space walkers on space shuttles and their reference is the hose that hooks them onto the mother ship. If one guy says, "I am going to fly free. I am taking a can of jet fuel and do my own thing," he may not come back. It is nice to think that it is possible to work outside of the reference, the security. Investigation and pioneering are done by people who do not know what is out there. That is why I have been so fascinated by eighteenth and nineteenth century adventurers because these people were penetrating the unknown, not knowing what is out there and not knowing whether you could get back or not. If you are worried about getting back, then you should not go. Frontiers are, of course, in the mind and those are the ones we have not exhausted.

(continued)

Some say that the spirit of a place is the sum of the countless numbers of people who came before. Place is also geographic location. Headlands Center for the Arts at Fort Barry is nestled in a bowl of hills, its back to the city, facing out towards the Pacific, as if waiting for whatever the ocean might bring. The dramatic treeless landscape, windswept and solitary, is a startling juxtapostion to the metropolis of San Francisco. Italo Calvino says of the life of the scholar that "in a quarter of an hour if they chose they could be back among other people." The scholar's strength is measured "not by how far away he has gone to live, but by the scant distance he requires to detach himself from the city without ever losing sight of it." Perhaps it is this sense of access, yet remove and isolation from the city, which has made this place so appealing to artists and thinkers.

Since its inception, the Headlands has actively explored and interpreted our relation to place. Projects by David Ireland, Bruce Tomb/John Randolph and Ann Hamilton have been commissioned to restore and interpret the public spaces of the Headlands, lending to them their own process of investigation and sense of history. Additionally, countless artists have created installations, performances, written works and musical compositions in the spaces. The place has become a lens, a tool for probing and recording the natural, cultural, and historical currents in which we are submerged, mindful that our investigations and knowledge of place are not simply to serve our sense of dialogue amongst each other, but that they inform who and where we are as a culture.

PUBLIC ROOMS: David Ireland 1986-1987

In 1986 David Ireland directed the first major project of the Headlands Center for the Arts. In many ways, the rehabilitation of the entrance stairwells and second floor rooms of the 1907 military barracks which Ireland and his interns embarked on was more like an archaeological dig than a traditional art project. An artist invents something new, an archaeologist reveals something old; one is a process of initiating, the other of responding. Ireland combined these two approaches into a process of give and take, of making a decision, seeing what resulted, and then making another decision. He conceives of his work as exploration rather than imposition. Things that have over time acquired an identity of their own, intrigue him, and this sense of history is an important aspect of his work.

Ireland and his crew sandblasted the layers of paint off the stamped tin ceilings and pillars; they used sandpaper, solvents, and finally dental tools to pick the paint off the beautiful stairwell railings and bannisters. They stripped the walls of the Eastwing back to its original plaster and the baseboards to their fine wood; in the Rodeo Room they sandblasted through many layers of color, finally stopping at the richly mottled greens and ochers that are now visible.

"Investigating and exploring are kind of fascinating to me; looking and digging into something to see what might be there. There's a lot of fine material: maple floors, tin ceilings, oak stairways, fine redwood wainscotting. All these things were quite a surprise. I think that in itself was quite a stimulation, finding this wonderful material that was treated with real disrespect. Our process was finding these things and trying to decide what to do with them, and then trying to step aside as much as possible so that the thing can be pretty much what it will be."

One way to define public art and site art is to say they both seek to take art out of its special category—its frame—and put it back into the continuum of experience, into the real, everyday world. Public art seeks to consider and involve its audience, site art its locations. Both are concerned with belonging, with making art that connects to its circumstances, and both demand a kind of responsive engagement on the part of the artist, rather than a directorial imposition. Ireland's rooms are, in many respects, both kinds of art. They are a celebration of what is already in the world and an attempt to lead us to see the richness that exists all around us. They are a collaboration with the original builders, with the materials, aesthetics and craftsmanship of the past. Finally, they are the heart of a thriving art center, a place for the public to look and join in the artistic activity going on.

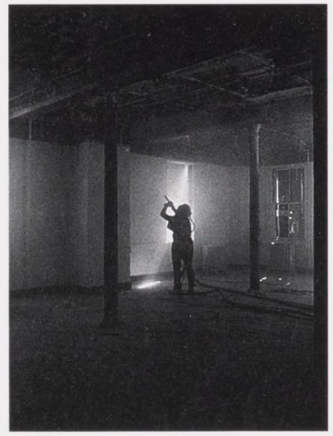
Stabilized, the rooms now most embody 1907, the year they were built, and 1987, the year Ireland and his assistants brought them to their present state. The eighty intervening years are alluded to in the scratches, cracks, stains, and other marks of time.

Artists who worked with David Ireland on this project are: Lisa Zukovsky, Kathleen Yapuncich, Sabina Walla, Katherine Wagner, Pamela Underhill, Matthew Thayer, Marguerite Thayer, David Tallitsch, Ian Sutherland, Nancy Selvin, Barbara Rhoades, Andrew Radcliffe, Sono Osato, Ruby Newman, John Matthias, Arlene Linder, Shereen Kanehisa, Thomas Joseph, Patty Hutchinson, Allen Graessle, Tim Collins, Nancy Clement, Machele Civey, Phoebe Brookbank, Martha Bowling, Marcia Bisset, Michael Bartlett and Jo Babcock.

AC: So that is why you are an artist rather than a safari guide now?

DI: Yes, I suppose. We all have our own frontiers, our own edges, and we can jump off into this unknown from the edge that marks this secure place to the place that offers none. There are so many times when I think that I just cannot move on because I think that there is not anything new, no new territory. It is like having a small depression, thinking that all is hopeless and then something happens and you say, "Well, there is still something else to be done." You see or dream something that triggers it, something that makes sense but cannot be articulated as sense.

Interview with Ann Chamberlain, April 1991



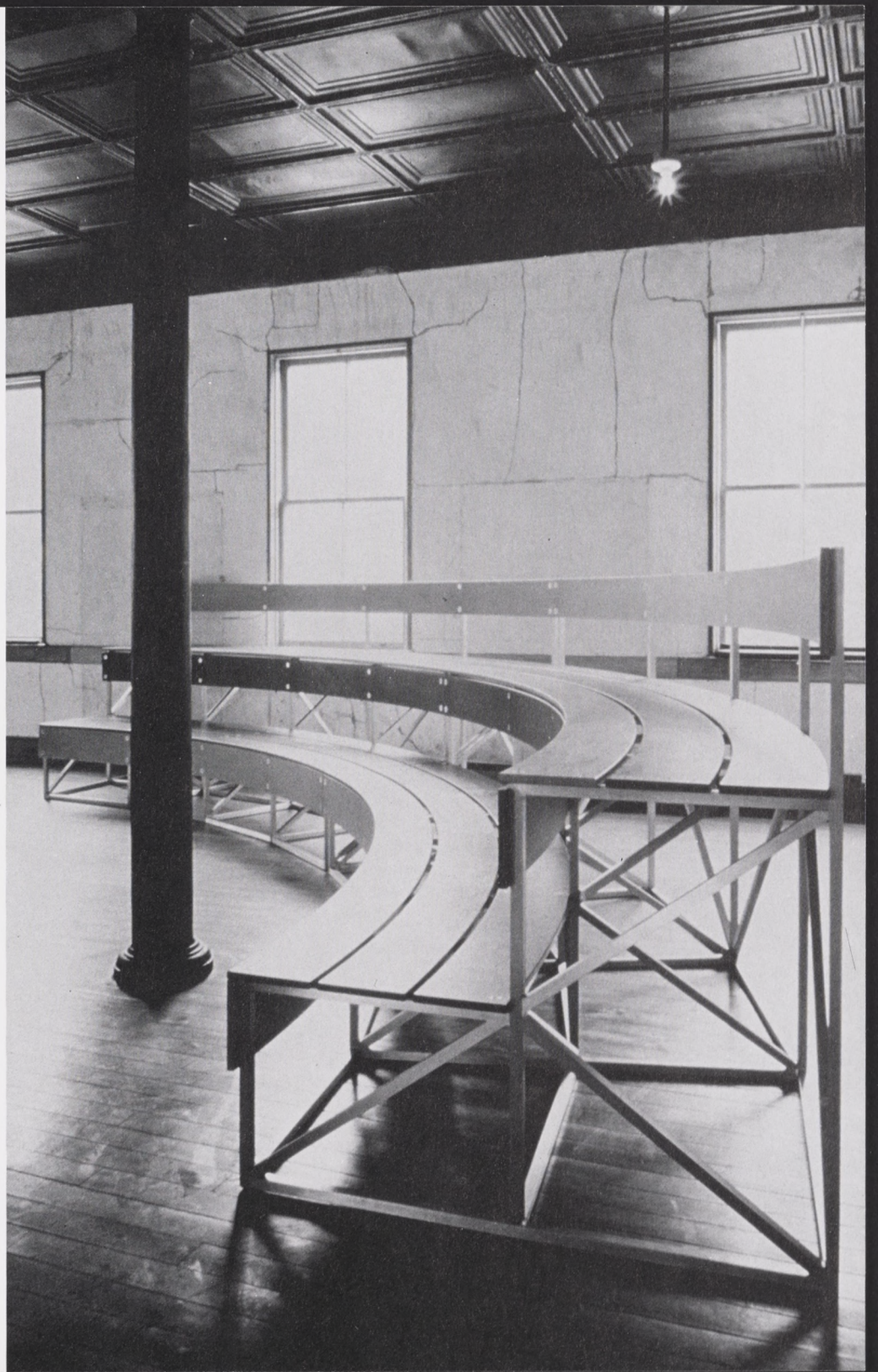
FURNITURE: David Ireland and Mark Mack

Headlands asked Ireland to design the furniture for the rooms, and he chose architect Mark Mack as his collaborator for the project. The furniture was an extension and elaboration of the ideas that went into making the rooms.

The final designs had many ideological implications that were part of the designers' intentions. Perhaps the strongest statement was made by the conference tables, which are headless, so that no one takes priority over the rest. The tables curve and, when placed together to form seating for a board meeting, form an elliptical oval with a hollow center. Their benches ensure that no one sits alone. They curve, so as to form a circle—the shape in which every point is equidistant from the center establishing a fraternity in place of a hierarchy.

The benches also bring the natural contours of the landscape beyond the windows into the manmade geometry of the rooms, creating a visual conversation between inside and outside. They gently undermine and yet emphasize by contrast the rectilineality of the room, whose austerity and emphasis on division and right angle might be seen as an echo of the military and dormitory purposes of the room. The Eastwing, a room once filled with slumbering rows of young recruits, is now populated by circles of visitors, talking, listening, and participating in the interchange of ideas. They propose a different sense of unity than that of the military, held together by shared concerns and an ideal of community.

Excerpts from an essay by Rebecca Solnit, 1989



Mark Thompson: We were trying to lay the groundwork for two things: one, the beginning of David's Project, and two, the beginnings of a community. So I saw my role as wearing two hats, and they were interrelated.

Ann Chamberlain: Can you talk more about the community aspect?

MT: These were a group of very young artists who were really hungry for attention, for support, for recognition. In the process of service you had to deal with very strong issues of identity, ego and letting go of your own priorities, your own sense of purpose, and being in service to a larger vision of a community that was being laid down. That was a tough thing for me to wrestle with and for the other artists, because it means in some sense a submergence. But if you come through that process, you come out the other side with a different relationship to ego and maybe a different perception on it.

AC: What was it that drew and held the interns to the project?

MT: I think it was a mix of things. I talked to them about the notion of service to another artist, to a community, to laying a foundation for something that would continue past their involvement. I was working with honeybees and I had set up a very large observation beehive in my office as a central metaphor for this community, this sort of invisible activity that was going on, drawing upon many sources. We had the sources within the building, within the landscape, all the things that were fueling and forming the process that was underway.

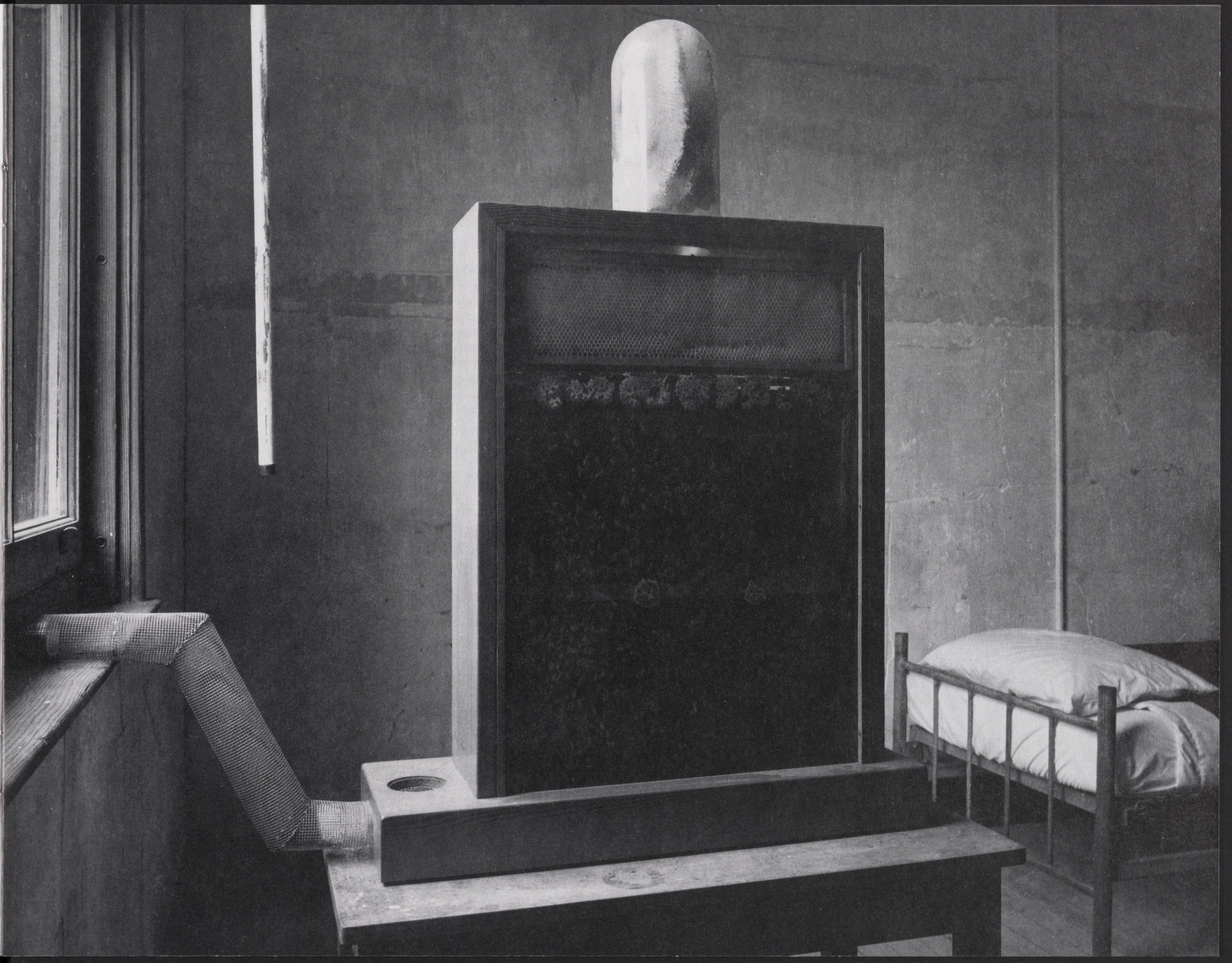
In a hive, as each drop of nectar is gathered from the field, each bee adds enzymes to it within her honey sack, chemically shifting the sugars so that a sort of alchemy begins. Over a course of hundreds of transfers, the sugar is reformed and goes from nectar into honey. Bees rarely eat the honey that they make, they gather towards the future, and pass from the process and leave behind food, nourishment and resource.

In the pouring of the threshold, we wanted to acknowledge all these invisible contributions. I hand delivered lead ingots to about fifty people with the invitation to bring them back and all would be melted down, poured into the threshold. In some ways their names would be lost, but they had laid a foundation that was built on a tremendous amount of gift energy. A certain alchemy had occurred in that process. In the tradition of transforming lead into gold, what the alchemists were really talking about was not making gold from lead, but the gold of personal transformation, vision, awareness. The interns had been part of that kind of process and that was what we could be proud of.

You had artists that had grown through the process of that internship and now started seeing other resources available to them - issues around ecological systems, issues around the archaeological possibilities of a site, issues around history. So their curiosity had been formed by their year and a half. Other people continued to do what they had always done. But all of them were left with a sense of what it means to be committed to a larger vision, something larger than any one individual. It was a rare time when a chemistry of an organization and a group of people is coming together and you generate that and you leave that behind. I feel like I have left something in place.

Mark Thompson is a Bay Area artist who worked with David Ireland overseeing the renovation of the meeting rooms and hallways and supervising the crew of artist interns who worked on the project for a year.

Interview with Ann Chamberlain, April 1991



LATRINE PROJECT: Interim Office of Architecture, 1987-1988

Interim Office of Architecture: The Latrine Project is not a straight historical renovation. It is a response to Headlands Center for the Arts and its presence in the buildings which has given it a new life. And I do not think that we would be upset if it has to change and evolve. You can say that our experiment in its present form lasted three or four years. What will happen if the Headlands Center for the Arts goes away? What will become of the latrine? Everything will evolve. Time is built in into any work that you do.

Ann Chamberlain: Aesthetically one of the things that influenced the Latrine Project was the work that David Ireland had done upstairs. Could you talk about that?

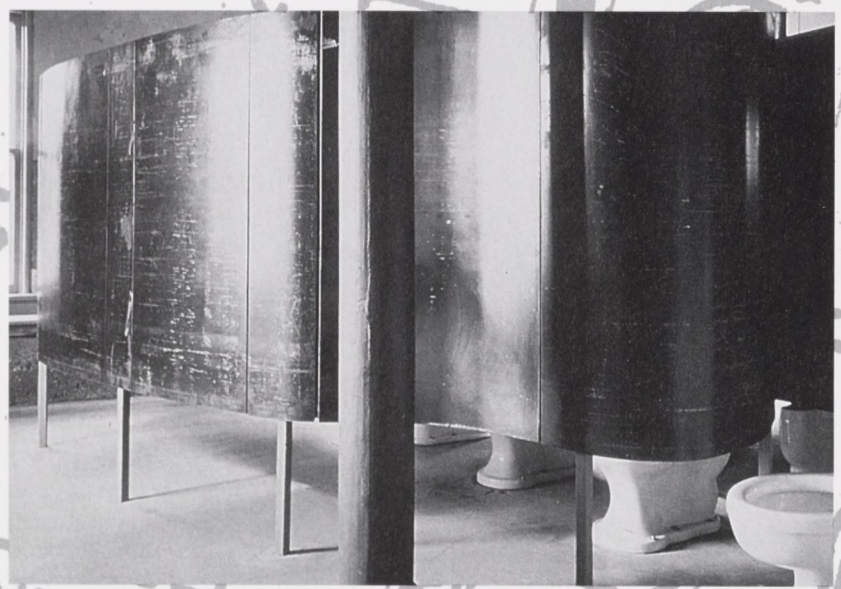
IOOA: David has been an inspiration for us both. We listened to the spirit of the building, the whole building, not just the latrine. And we looked at how David interpreted those rooms. They obviously had an idea going, and we tried to respect the integrity of the building and to do something that was complementary to David's rooms.

AC: The Headlands is a kind of laboratory, a place where there is a thinking about new roles and ways of working for artists. You have chosen to work collaboratively. Can you talk about the values, the benefits of your collaboration?

IOOA: With architecture, the scale of the project is too large for one human to handle everything. Architecture schools teach a very rigorous methodology for approaching and solving problems.We have taken that architectural process, and stepped back from it, using it as a tool to approach and create a dialogue with the space. Collaboration is a natural way to approach something that is larger than you are. It sets up a dialogue between you and another person who sees the space differently. It also enables you to let go of the idea of preciousness. If there is a problem we can also talk about it, it does not become such a personal attack or confrontation. A lot of times we embark on things that we have never done before and this emotional back up is very important as well.

The Headlands isn't necessarily public art. People are going there with certain expectations. They throw themselves into the world of art for a moment. It is a lot different than public art where people are unsuspecting like at Ninth and Folsom. Doing something there is truly public art because it is not a destination for people who are looking for the arts.

AC: Do you you see it more as an alternative to a museum, a vessel for art?



IOOA: Not a museum. It is maybe its own genre. Maybe it is a new kind of museum. A living museum.

AC: In what way living?

IOOA: People are continuing to do things there. Things are generated from there as opposed to ending up there. And they are using the spaces too. It is not a place where you look at the rooms behind cords. The rooms that David, Ann and we did will continue to be used and will have a spirit and life of their own. It is a place with an attitude towards its walls, its envelope, its environment. That's not a derogatory comment. It is a thoughtful comment in a sense that people with vision have been asked to come and interpret the space. And the people who come to use the space are allowed to interpret either through the artists' eyes or as it is being used. It resonates with a certain kind of thoughtfulness.

Bruce Tomb and John Randolph, interview with Ann Chamberlain, April 1991

The Latrine Project by Bruce Tomb and John Randolph of the Interim Office of Architecture, was the second building commission by Headlands Center for the Arts. John Randolph and Bruce Tomb are partners in the firm IOOA, the Interim Office of Architecture in San Francisco.

When the latrine was originally installed in the early 1940's, there was a line of seven urinals, ten toilets in the middle of the room with no partitions, and fifteen sinks. Although adequate for military purposes, this delineation was not suitable for the Center's needs. Bruce and John built partitions around the toilets, choosing 1/4" steel plate — in their words, "excessive as a material for vanity panels, but this overkill quality follows the military tradition." The steel doors' closing reverberate, creating an additional "wall of sound" in the space.

The plumbing connections: the pipes were hung from the ceiling, so the water now moves through the space rather than inside the walls or attached to them. Flexible hoses were installed in response to the strong water pressure in the building. "We wanted to keep the original character of the latrine in its starkness. We exposed the workings of the plumbing to become more aware of the systems that are inherent in this kind of space, so there is a sense of the space as a room with the utilities running through it. We magnified the movement created by the water."

They took off layers of paint, the years of history marked by the different colors. The gray painted wainscotting became a visual guide to the rest of the project, an interior horizon line. The wooden wainscotting was removed, revealing rough concrete foundations.

The original plumbing fixtures remain, though not all function, retaining the military symmetry. "It emphasizes the contradictions inherent in the military institution. Things start off wanting to be a certain way, but don't end up that way. The space has an anthropomorphic layout with a big pair of iron lungs, a spine and even a crotch piece. The bathroom partitions comment on our culture's ideas of privacy. You develop systems of privacy for yourself, using very substantial things. But if you go into this space, its quite apparent visual privacy is scantily addressed."

The Latrine Project was completed with the assistance of Michael Bartlett, Phoebe Brookbank, Melissa Kwasny, Scot Halpin, John Matthias, Sono Osato, Jim Paul, Michele Sudduth, Ian Sutherland, Marguerite Thayer, Katherine Wagner, Sabina Walla, Colleen Yee, and Lisa Zukovsky. Mark Pauline and Kai Klaasen fabricated the partitions and Dan Lowery handled the welding.

Jennifer Dowley, 1988

MESS HALL: Ann Hamilton, 1989-1990

What initially led me to do installations was wanting to create an environment that literally absorbs you. It's breaking down the object that's outside you and allowing a space to come into being. I feel increasingly that the art context has become a frame and I'm wanting to see how to move out of that. So part of what led me to the kitchen project was wanting to make things real, to make things functional. I'm interested in extending the metaphor into real systems and being concerned with the economics of how something happens, how things are consumed, how they are produced. All systems; water, heating, and economic really come together in the kitchen.

If there is art in it, hopefully, that will be in the way that it is set up: the attitudes that are part of the way that it happens, the kind of equipment that is chosen, the kind of furniture - every detail. It is in their use that there is some art. It is not the mess hall in itself as an object, because it is not an object - it will be a cumulative process through people who come in and out and through myself continuing to care about it and live with it.

Instead of choosing one particular aspect of the history or the landscape of this place, I wanted all of it to filter in and inform it in different ways. It is important to acknowledge the history that came before: it needs to be a place with real information about what's here - cookbooks and leaves and maps.

When you live here, you participate in maintaining and creating the systems and not just going in and using them and leaving. The sorts of questions I've come up with are: What kind of seating? What kind of tables? What kind of lighting allows one to maintain a sense of individuality within a group? How is the space allowing rather than deterministic? How does it invite rather than instruct? And how does it provide information without telling information? There's a way of presenting things that opens people up and another way that closes you down. I hope that a space can do that.

Interview with Jennifer Dowley, 1990

There's a way metaphors are created that has to do with the way things are positioned in space, in the way that your body experiences the way things smell, that talks about value.

One of the primary things behind the work is a belief in the importance of the information that comes through our skin. We live in a world where we don't acknowledge the way things feel. Everything is about information and yet there's wisdom and language in what comes through the skin: in my work there's an attempt to articulate that. A second value in the work is a strong belief in hand labor and the value of laboring together.

The work talks about a loss that comes from seeing things as human centered, it's trying to give voice to the knowledge that comes through natural systems, materials and sources.

Most of the time we spend in our head: we have so much information coming in through our eyes, our mouths, or our ears, that everything gets focused up in the body, and we lose track of where our feet are. It's things that seep through your feet that have a voice and intelligence.

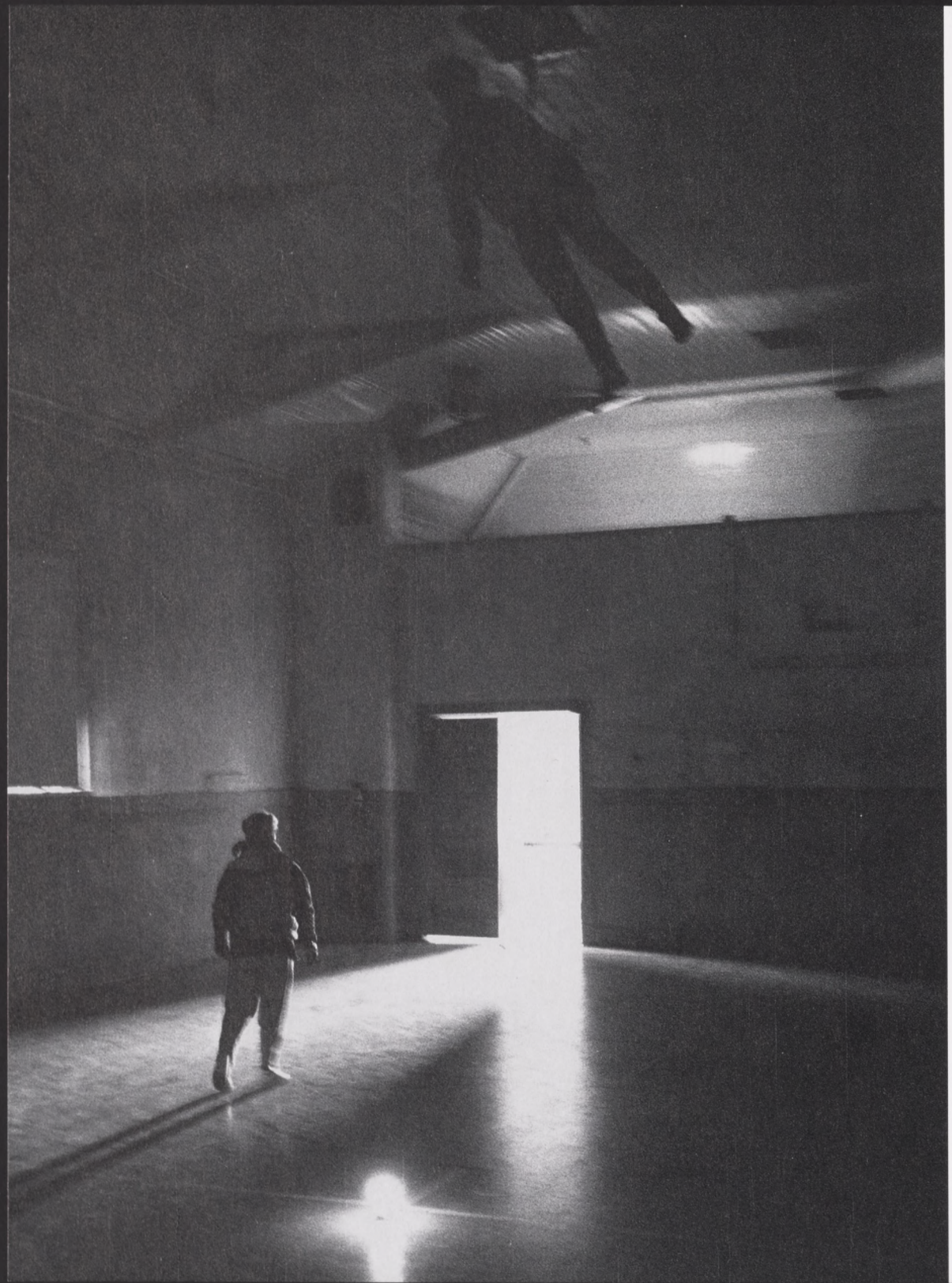
I think you feel your smallness here and your insignificance because of the weather. But it also has this other side which leads to the ethic or the attitude that you are living in a system where the human aspect is not the most important one and it breaks down those hierarchies, and that is something that is so easy to forget when you live in a city or even a small town.

Ann Hamilton, in lecture with Wes Jackson, March 1990

Artists in Residence

The art we made in the Headlands we made of the place itself—out of the colonies of wild bees in some of the structures, the hawks and bobcat and deer that inhabit the hills, the history of the military ruins on the ridges, the fog and the tide, among other things. The Center presented us with a year-long seminar on the subject of the Headlands, bringing in geologists, historians, and naturalists. The staff at the Center did not dictate what we did—they simply made the place available. Jim Paul

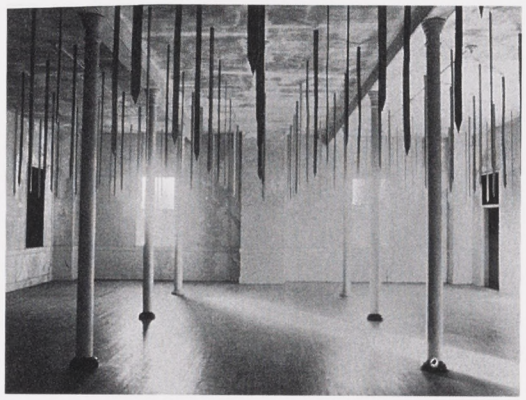
Each year, five artists from the Bay Area and twenty artists from selected parts of the country and around the world, work at the Center for periods ranging from four weeks to eleven months. Their time at the Headlands is spent pursuing their own investigations: exploring the area and its social, cultural and historical resources. Each artist is assigned a studio, the dimension and nature of which vary widely from the attic spaces of Buildings 944 and 945, and the third floor office spaces of 945, to the east and westwings (the dance halls, as one artist termed them) and the gym. For many artists, the studio itself became a source of inspiration and has had an impact on their work.



The gym was a wonderfully varied wildlife sanctuary, and every creature seemed to have its hour. At dusk, a bird forced his way in through a hole beneath the eaves, clumsily flapping and screeching. I had to run outside several times before I finally saw who was making this noise. It was one of those iridescent black birds with white rings around its eyes.

Joanna Haigood, artist in residence, 1987

Dances for Bldg. T952,
Joanna Haigood, 1989



Stakes, Howard Martin, 1989

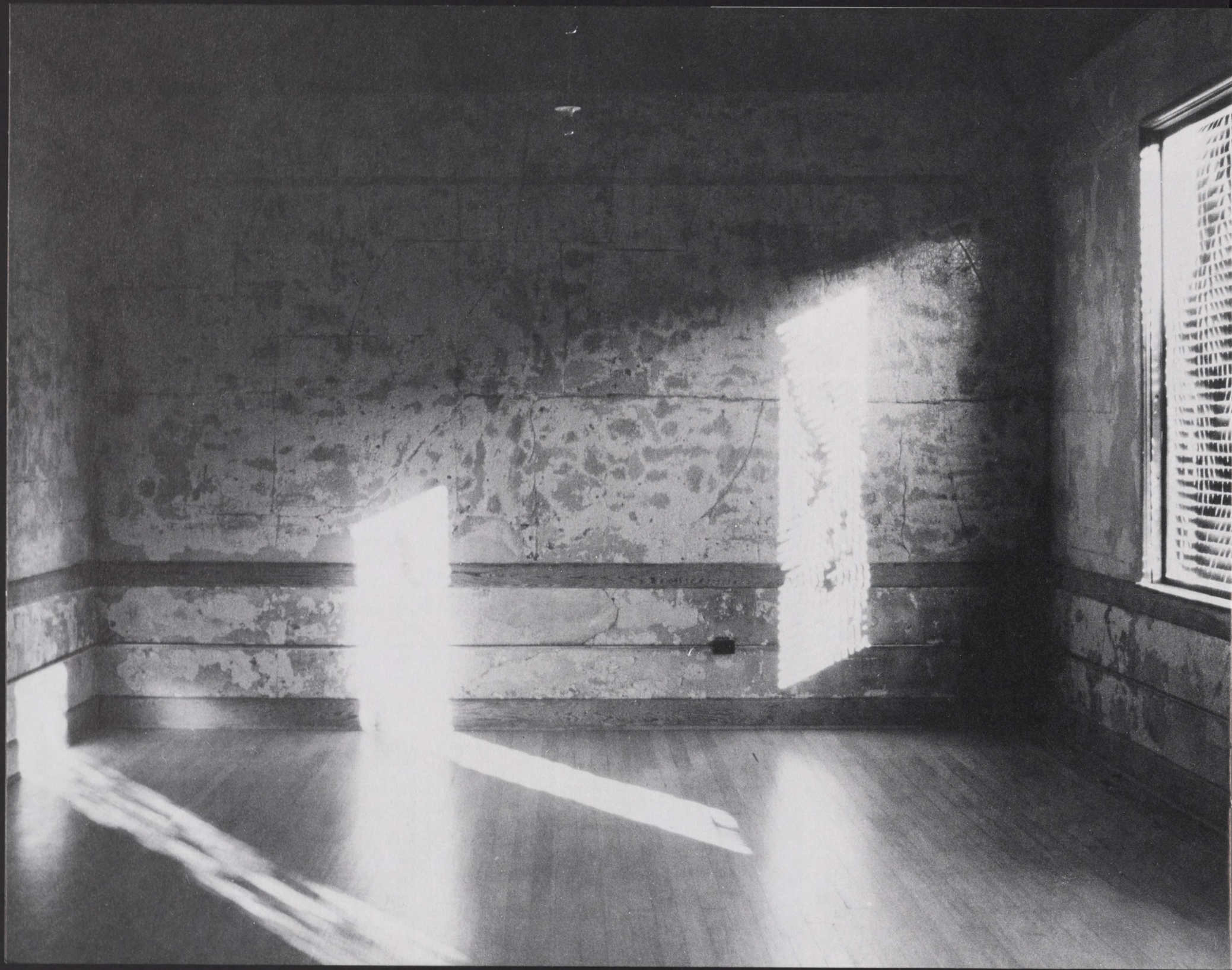
This place is melancholy! But so is the rest of the northern California coast when the sun doesn't shine; these tired old buildings, the overgrown grounds, the military history only compound the feeling, especially when it's overcast.

Howard Martin, artist in residence, 1989

I got to live in the place, to see it at different times of day, and that really does change how you feel. You have time to let your initial feelings grow, or to abandon them. So I realized the importance of time spent with a space, a site.

Mie Preckler, artist in residence, 1988

Revference,
Mie Preckler, 1988



At the Headlands the environment was so quiet I could concentrate on things that were subtler. I became involved in a whole world of things that are invisible: what we see, hear, and feel is a very narrow window on the physical world. I became interested in making visible other phenomena, such as wind currents. Digital Wind came from watching the wind blowing through grass. When the grass is still flexible, it's a perfect way of visualizing the interaction of air and the typography of the land. The small panels, like the grass, reveal the hidden pattern of the wind passing through them.

Ned Kahn, artist in residence, 1987

Digital Wind,
Ned Kahn, 1987

What really sticks in my mind about the buildings and my studio in particular is the quiet during off hours. I'd always forget to bring a radio out here and would be stuck listening to the sound the building makes. The sound that the only working toilet makes when flushed in the men's latrine two floors below is pretty remarkable. It took me my entire residency to figure out that it wasn't the guys downstairs turning on a power saw. Must have been something when all the toilets worked. After I'd get tired of listening, I'd find myself whistling. I'd always know when there was some other fool in the building who had forgotten his radio, because I'd hear whistling coming from far off places. His whistling, like my own, would never last long. Someone might hear you and that would be embarrassing.

Howard Martin, artist in residence, 1989

Haru,
Reiko Goto, 1989

The Room

No one will be surprised to learn that the tower room is the abode of a gentle, young girl and that she is haunted by the memories of an ardent ancestress. - *Bachelard*

Better I in the shadows,
watching those below in the light
pulling fistfuls of leaves
from young eucalyptus. Herb-blue
and silver, those limbs could be mine,
akimbo, or thin as arroyo willow,
stretched in the warm patches of sun.

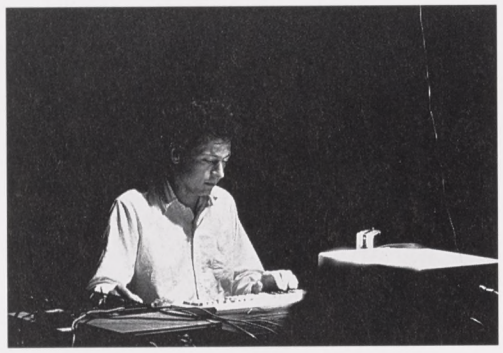
Everything I've learned,
I've learned from these windows,
how the day marches out
from first one wall, then the other.
Time passes like music,
outside me, the intricate scratching
of sorrel against sage, fennel
and hemlock locked in a tangle.
If I could touch them,
I could cook them or kill.

Above this room, which I chose,
which I have inherited,
the planets travel
like a sleeping eye under the lid.

Much that was once common
is now secret. Three tribes
are extinct: Gabrielino,
Island, Nicoleno. At night,
the ocean catches
in the arms of the spanish trees.

When the moon intrudes,
porcelain, weathered, the color
of ancestors, the meat of pears,
I listen less for footsteps
than the broken bodies
of kestral, owl, those
frightened by the light
they found their way in by.

Melissa Kwasny,
artist in residence, 1987



Paul DeMarinis in concert

I worked in the attic at night in the summers. It was hot and I opened the windows and just listened to the noises outside. It was probably the only tropical place in the Bay Area. I did a lot of thinking. I don't know what I thought. But those thoughts were my own. Pieces later came out of those thoughts.

Paul DeMarinis, artist in residence, 1989

The attic is home to memory. Here we store our treasured and cast-off possessions, an idiosyncratic archive. But today, attics are not standard features of a house; their contents are expendable in a culture of throwaways. This promotes a dangerous kind of amnesia. With no place to accumulate the objects that carry our histories, we lose track of who we are.

Meeting the dry wood smell at the top of the stairs always made me happy. The dryness held stillness, the scent of wood breathing in solitude, sweet like hay. The smell of a place at peace with itself. I pored over gouges in the floor, the grain of the support beams, the path of a previous fire across the roof joists, sensing the open spaces in between like the contours of a body. I found secret sounds in the space by tapping all its surfaces with a stick. The roof leaked and the pattern of drips was never the same.

The light pulled me to the windows and I rested my back against the darkness. I was rarely afraid in this huge space at night. In the silence, sounds from outside became presences inside. Foghorns asked questions.

In the east wing, two rows of nails along opposite beams are numbered from 1 to 104 by manila paper squares neatly stapled above each one. Uniforms were hung here. Stenciled numbers appear on the doors of a derelict set of lockers in the west wing.

Greacian Goeke, artist in residence, 1989

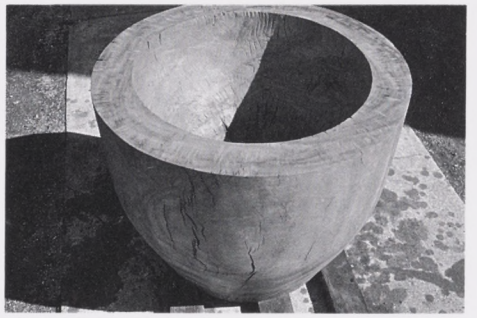
Wish Line and Rock Table,
Greacian Goeke, 1989

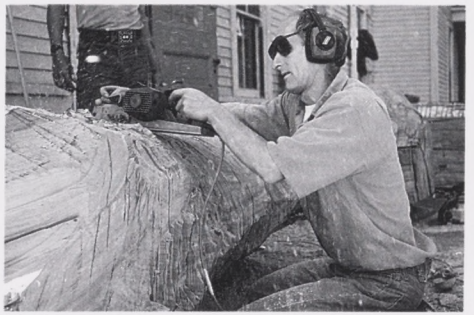
in CONVERSATION

Places are held in sites by personal and common values, and by the maintenance of those values over time, as memory. As remembered, places are thus conserved, while sites, the forgotten places, are exploited. Jeff Kelley

This place brings together our concerns and issues as a community. None of us lives in isolation: we define ourselves through language, our social relations and our common experiences. The public forums at the Headlands are informal, often involving two or more people, and offer a chance to exchange ideas as well as present new work. The conversations acknowledge not so much individual accomplishments as group understanding. The following is a selection of excepts from presentations at the Headlands between 1986 and 1989 which have informed, provoked and inspired our thinking.

TONY CRAGG: On Work





When I left school I worked for a while in a laboratory of biochemistry. I was the youngest person in this laboratory by at least ten years. It was a strange existence, not just a job that started at nine and ended at five, but a job one actually had to live through. You get up at five o'clock in the morning and turn an experiment on, or turn one off, or read the results. But it was a job that demanded little concentration. There was a lot of good rock music then and also the beginnings of a student movement. There were great debates, discussions about the future course of a country like Great Britain, which of course is a very old capitalist country. And I became very unhappy working in this laboratory, because I had so little contact and no participation in all these things, and this energy that was going around.

I remember starting to draw, starting to make objects, while working in this laboratory. I had never been interested in art, in paints, whatever. But there was just a certain point in time when I thought, "Well, this is it - this is what I'm going to do."

After a year or two I did manage to get into an art school. During a break I worked in a foundry in western England. The job was from half-past seven in the evening till half-past-seven in the morning. And the foundry was a very big hall. At one end were two great big furnaces melting metal. A big chain of molds came by very slowly past a stage, and you had to pour the metal into the molds. During the night, the molds serpentine all the way up this hall. It takes four or five hours till they suddenly crash into the ground and then the slap sand, which is part of the mold, comes out of one side and the glowing molds come out the other. My job was to make sure that it was working properly. There were some very beautiful things, like the pile of sand that came out to one side, eventually forming a huge cone of sand which was much higher than this room by the end of the night.

It was very hard work in the foundry and you felt really fit and dynamic. The noise and the vision of the factory was something I couldn't get out of my mind. It was very difficult to go back to art school and just play around. So I started to try to remember those things that interested me, the way things formed themselves in the factory subject to the laws of physics, the way the natural world is. The things I became interested in had a realness about them, a contact and a way of dealing with the world.

I decided I wasn't really going to try to make any sculpture. Instead, I tried to make as many objects as possible in a day. I had a tandem bicycle and everyday in the early morning I'd take different routes to get to the school, loading up the back of the tandem with various materials, bringing them into the studio, and working with these materials through the day. Sometimes I made 30 or 40 objects in a day without any conscious sense of trying to evaluate them, not trying to think, "This is sculpture, this isn't sculpture, this is formal, this doesn't have any content." A lot of these objects were silly little things which were my idea of what a landscape looked like, or what parts of animals looked like, or maybe what cars looked like, or whatever. They were images in a way, but very lost in banal, dirty and shabby materials. They became one very big something, looking like a geological cross-section or a big, solid block, or two very big, solid blocks. And this was the first object that I had made. But eventually it got to be too much. The head of the art school's nerve cracked and he said, "Get this bloody place cleaned up!"

The late 60's and the early 70's was for contemporary art a very important time. It was a time of nomination for me. This nomination was a process of taking hitherto non-art materials and bringing them in, as part of the vocabulary of art. I came to see a certain finite vocabulary of materials. It may be a few thousand materials, but it is finite. At that time a lot of artists identified with a certain material, with fat, or felt, or neon light - it just goes on forever.

Not only was it a time of nominating materials, it was also a time of changing and widening the vocabulary of how one makes art, the action, the gesture. You could walk art, you could kiss art, you could love art, you could kill art. The whole vocabulary of human activity came into it. Also, this was a time, both in America and in Europe, in which ideas about how art could work were pushed back enormously - possibly most successfully in terms of an artist like Joseph Beuys, who pushed back the borders of what art would be involved in - in a political sense, in a social sense. I think Beuys actually said that, "Everybody is an artist, it's just that some artists are better than others. And soldiers and policeman are the worst artists."

In 1977, I made a work out of found plastic objects. I just walked around with a bag, and took them back to my studio. I was looking and thinking that there's something really cruddy about this material. It was ugly trash and it made you sick. But playing around with it long enough, I realized there were certain things about it. For one thing, it went from red, orange, yellow, green to blue, black, and white - as if all the producers of these objects just had a very simple color palette. It was very irritating.

That repulsion at the vile or regressive original material settled into acceptance, and the work became also a drawing lesson for

me - a study in the way in which the pictorial or sometimes even anatomical sense makes the images. But it was still a form language - it had been out there somewhere and it had been used, it had a sense of nature about it, and it brought up the whole problem of where naturalness or artificiality begins.

But it never was a great virtue for me to be able to make art out of rubbish. That concept was established very well by Picasso and others at the beginning of the century. The concept did, however, give me a sense of value and feeling for the objects around us that was very important. When we think of something in nature, if it's a petal, branch, or tree, we have a relationship - we automatically feel we have a huge wealth of meaning. For woods, we have poetry or metaphysics, or the romance of a smell, a history. But if you have a material like styrofoam, you don't have any of that, but that's the stuff we live in and that's the stuff we produce. So I thought it was an important idea, a realization that the tendency in the world is always trying to find some way of trying to rub off onto the plastic some history, some romance, some poetry.

I don't think the environment is about to turn back - it cannot be stored, the environment; even in a situation such as the Headlands, it is not nature - there is very little that is natural in this park. If you want to make a nature reserve, all you do is do not let anybody in. But you can turn back to look at what has been done and take complete responsibility for what we are doing.

If in the end we do kill nature, there are still words for things we've never seen, like tiger. If there were no more tigers, "tiger" becomes this strange abstract thing - of the tiger's power and the speed and the strength and the viciousness and the ferocity. If we do fail, we should have some alternatives. If there are no bird songs anymore, then let me put the radio on and hear something just as beautiful, just as good. It's a difficult thing to imagine, isn't it?

I think this is what should really be in our veins, in our pulse, in our intentions. Artists do have a very particular kind of responsibility. We have images in our heads - we have visions of things which aren't words, which have much more complicated syntax than ordinary verbal language. If there are 2,000 words that we're using in everyday life, there are thousands of millions of color images we are using everyday, and the language that goes with them is incredibly complicated and incredibly supple and varied. Eventually I think that at a certain point in time it will be more important to make things with a visual language than it will be to write books.

And we talk about freedom, but what kind of freedom do we have? The only freedom that will be left for us is the freedom of what we have between our ears - to make images, to make visions, to imagine things, to make things - this is our real freedom that is left, and for that you need a strong vocabulary of images, of colors, of forms, of feelings, of associations, not just with this little strange activity of making sculpture, but with the whole world, because that's the only way you can be totally responsible for your actions.

Excerpts of a talk given in January 1989. Tony Cragg, a British artist now residing in Wuppertal, Germany, spent 6 weeks at the Center in 1988 as the Center's first international artist in residence.

2 Mortars and Landscape,
Tony Cragg, 1988

JEFF KELLEY: Art in Place

At some moment in the late 1970s, we crossed an important threshold: we moved beyond sites and into places. At the time, this crossing went largely unnoticed, in part because thresholds are not so much boundaries as matters of dawning awareness, and also because it is only in retrospect that any collective arcs drawn by that awareness come into focus. Even so, one can now discern in much site-oriented and socially-driven art of the past two decades an emerging consciousness of the thresholds at which the sites of art become the arts of place.

One such threshold lies at the boundaries of art itself, and in the advent of minimalism and earthworks those boundaries were extended to circumscribe the sites in which artworks were made and placed. Sculpture, by then a disintegrating academic category that included all manner of art making (to the chagrin of many sculptors), became "site-specific." Site-specificity, though, often referred more to the perceptual precision-fitting of disembodied modernist objects into dislocated museum spaces, than to an acknowledgement of the social and cultural contents of a place.

Even now, the term "site" tends to mean a place for art, rather than the arts of place. Over the past decade, though, artists have begun to acknowledge what our bones already know: that it feels very different to be in a place than to be on-site. In a place, one taps a longer root, digs a deeper well. The human particularity of places has begun to fill out the art-like specificity of sites.

Site into Place

One might say that while a site represents the constituent physical properties of a place - its mass, space, light, duration, location, and material processes - a place represents the practical, vernacular, psychological, social, cultural, ceremonial, ethnic, economic, political, and historical dimensions of a site. Sites are like frameworks. Places are what fill them out and make them work. Sites are like maps or mines while places are the reservoirs of human content, like memory or gardens. A site feeds out of itself and a place feeds in. A place is useful and a site is used. A used-up site is abandoned, and abandoned places are ruins.

Places are held in sites by personal and common values, and by the maintenance of those values over time, as memory. As remembered, places are thus conserved, while sites, the forgotten places, are exploited. This conservation is at root psychological, and in a social sense, memorial. But if places are held inside us, they are not solipsistic since they can be commonly held. At a given threshold, our commonly held places become communities, and communities are held together by what Wendell Berry calls "preserving knowledge." As he sees it, a community is "an order of memories" in which "the essential wisdom accumulates in communities much as fertility builds in the soil." Conversely, sites are depleted communities, and any artist who works in places must be ready to work on a scale which is commonly held.

Time

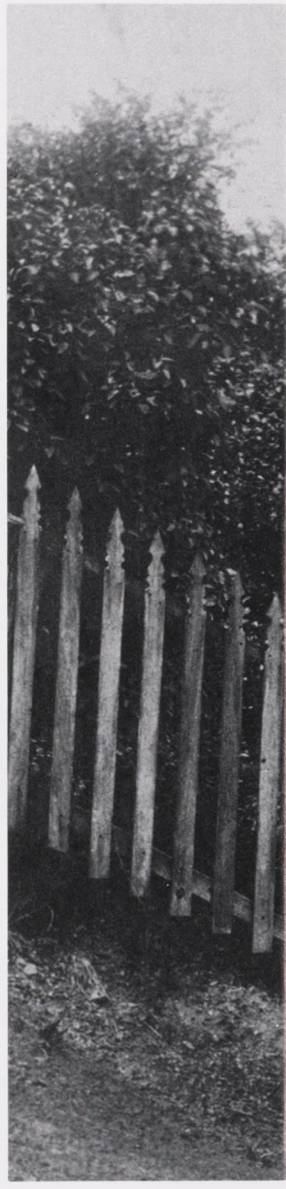
Time is also a condition of sites and places, but whereas the time of sites tends to erode, erase, and reveal lost places, the time of places tends to fold back into a site those layers of human memory and experience that cultivate its ground, making it common and social. If time is a condition of places, its erosive effects on-site appeal to our romantic sensibilities by invoking the specter of ruins. But ruins are the sites of lost places, while places are defined by an accretion of human experience that is often brought into focus through personal or collective memory in its present tense, the way ritual and storytelling fold the past into the present. Perhaps it is in this sense that what we feel in ruins is, as much as anything, the loss of place. But time in place is less a witness to loss than to recovery and reclamation.

Shelters and Stages

Places are experienced concretely, not as equations of function to form. In this sense, architecture is not place until and unless we subvert it with the contents of our lives. Peter Eisenman makes a distinction between building (a verb) and architecture (a noun). "Building," he says, "is about serving function; architecture is about serving art." It is in the vernacular, street-level sense that places exist. In them, we particularize designs, bringing them down to earth.

Often, the most dominant form of sited-rhetoric is architecture, which makes its claims to a site in uncompromising terms, forever, and on behalf of its patron. By contrast, the best artists of place know that the work they do is about recovering the place, not decorating the site. Their engagement with a site is often adversarial in order to liberate the place from the rhetorical claims imposed upon it by those who control the site.

It has been tempting over the past decade to accept architecture as the primary analogue for artworks of and in place, in part because artists have so often adopted the shelter motif, and because the discourse between art and architecture has been



The author's great great grandparents who immigrated to Penn. from County Kerry, Ireland

such a significant aspect of modernism. Indeed, one museum went so far as to consign the works of such disparate artists as Robert Smithson and Herbert Bayer to the mid-century idealism of "social design," with Bayer as the missing link between the Bauhaus and artists' shelters - a bogus alignment of very different approaches to the practice of art, landscape, architecture, and society.

While many artists of place are motivated toward social engagement through their works - and are thereby romantic and utopian to that degree - they are neither social nor esthetic idealists, basing their practice, instead, upon the particular, pragmatic, and ever-changing conditions of particular places. They do not design society. They represent place. If their works become models for social design, all the better. But an art of place is not about abstract equations of function to form, which is the legacy of mid-century utopian architecture. It is human scale work about human scale work. The extent to which the content of a place resonates in other places is the extent to which an art of place has resonance. The place, not the art, is the metaphor. In another place, one would need another art.

Perhaps the better analogue for an art of place is theater - not that of the proscenium stage, but rather the latent theater of our personal and social lives. In 1966, Michael Kirby described the participants in Allan Kaprow's happenings as "non-matrixed performers," as the conscious enactors of scripted tasks which did not require the affectation of a dramatic persona. You just performed the task as yourself. Around the same time, Kaprow wrote in *Assemblage, Environments, and Happenings*, "If there are to be measures and limits in art they must be of a new kind. Rather than fight against the confines of a typical room, many are actively considering working out in the open. They cannot wait for the new architecture." Of course, the new architecture never came, although its precedents existed for Kaprow in Shwitter's Merzbau, Frederick Keisler's concept of the "endless room," and also in the ceremonial and living spaces of Native American and African societies. In retrospect, Kirby's notion of a non-matrixed performance and the kind of flexible, organic architecture Kaprow had in mind were parts of a broad intention to integrate artists and art into non-art settings. Beyond the new theater or the new architecture, what they unwittingly predicted was the convergence of the two in the context of place.

Work

In a particularly American sense, the theater of modernism has been scripted by the act of work. As such critics as Leo Steinberg and Harold Rosenberg have noted, we have tried since the early 19th century to convert works of art into an art of work, to peel away from artworks that frosty European patina that keeps us from a direct experience of the world. "Americans," wrote Rosenberg, "dream of taking home hunks of raw nature." In this sense, work has been seen as a penitential ethic by which American art is stripped of aristocratic pretensions and made common, especially if that work is tied to the land.

And yet, in the context of North American cultural mythologies, the reification of work feels like a fundamentally male, specifically Anglo conceit. It is a way of paying one's Protestant dues for being merely an artist in a culture of cowboys, but the terms of that bargain were not forged by women or non-Europeans. Perhaps tellingly, the archetypal worker of American modernism was Jackson Pollock, an abusive, alcoholic tough guy for whom painting was where the action was. Behind him was the hard-nosed, journalistic sensibility of the American regionalists, and ahead were the street theatrics of happenings, the industrial materials of minimalism, and the hunks of raw earthworks, all infused with a sense of the common, the literal, process, and of the capacity of work to demystify art in the name of life.

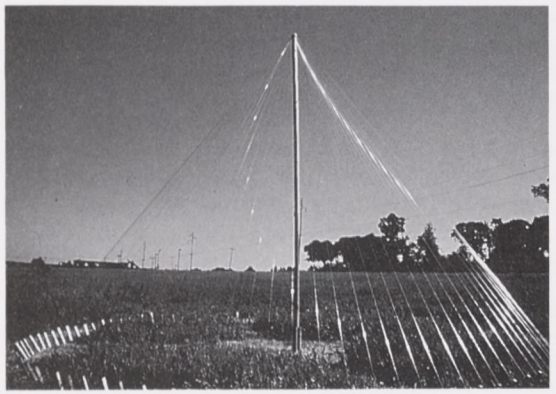
At its worst, this ethos of work perpetuates a stereotypical, masculine standard for the redemption of artists as workers. At its best, it suggests that art is a process in which we can all participate. Doug Hollis once said that while he didn't know if people understood his work as art, he was certain they understood his art as work. The point is not to romanticize work. Rather, in an age when the tangibility of the world has been flattened by the ubiquitous formalist criticism of culture called "the media," one might think of an art of place as a theater of social engagement in the context of our common work.

Tools

The condition of a place is the condition of an art of place. A place is a particular condition. Siah Armajani sees a place as an extension of the activity it contains and which, in turn, defines it as a place. He sees sets of tools used to generate a set of conditions that constitute a place. Those conditions are transitive and relational. They involve a web of human activities that give meaning to the place, that animate the tools. This is a place's practical dimension. In it, we recognize the theater of place passing through tools, locations, and sites.

When Armajani builds a public reading room, he shapes it according to a reader's need for interior light. The structure takes the shape of the activity it was created to contain. It is open to the possibility of readers reading, and it is not really a place until reading occurs. In this sense, a place cannot exist

Mining Removal, Andrew Leicester



Wind Organ for Standing Bear, Doug Hollis

outside the present. It is a "here and now" extension of the activity, the work, that shapes it. If we have its particular work in common, if we read or cross bridges together, then a place is an expression of our common work. And that work is nothing so mundane as eating lunch, but rather a socially consequential activity, like reading Thomas Jefferson in a place that embodies his notions of social democracy, of what is required of a private citizen in a public place. Perhaps more than any artist, Armajani articulates the thresholds at which the private individual becomes a public member, at which personal comfort is measured in terms of communal responsibility.

Armajani writes, "It is the place that makes ordinary things particular." By using a tool, we particularize its location. We animate it with our work. We move along the axis of our work from the general location to the particular place. We deduce place. We go home. At bottom, Armajani's art, his work, is about the confluence of public and private space in a democracy. Perhaps going home - and being left alone there - is the supreme American theater.

An American Theater

When "Power of Place," an urban site research group organized by Dolores Hayden in Los Angeles, conducts a workshop in which the social history of that city's first all-black fire station is resurrected and its fire fighters and their living relatives are honored, it returns history to a city too often thought to have none. The human values of Los Angeles are cognitively mapped and grounded in the places they helped create. A hybrid of performance, conceptual art, and urban design, Hayden's vision - or might we call it a re-vision - enters the public domain as a spectacle of remembering, and of doing so in terms of the ethnic and cultural diversity that shaped a city. The first sites of that diversity may be gone, but the power of places to remember are being reclaimed.

When Douglas Hollis installs an outdoor matrix of aolean harps and wind organs, he activates an invisible sonic ceiling that settles over its place as a physiological translation of the wave of patterns of the wind. Since sound is a physical, albeit invisible, field, the mass of Hollis' sculptures - of his places - varies from breeze to breeze, now inflated, now diminished. It seems to breathe. One moves in sympathetic resonance toward the shifting proportions of the sound, and thereby measures, and is measured by, the spatial, temporal, and physical wavelength properties of a given place. A place becomes an extension of the sensing body; sculpture, as such, becomes an instrument. It works. When the air is still, the art is waiting.

When Andrew Leicester constructs a mining memorial on a hillside near Frostberg, Maryland - in the coal mining belt of the Appalachians - he pays homage to the generations of local miners who are the real spent resources of the American coal industry. By entering this quasi-architectural structure, which refers to tracks, tunnels, company row houses, and a tailing pile, one can move through a series of iconographic chambers that represent the miners' one-track lives and suggest a kind of cradle-to-grave mining of human potential. In one chamber, actual tools owned by local miners, with whom the artist researched his project, are displayed. In an ironic reversal of convention, the museum is suddenly in the memorial, its artifacts taken from the place where it is, its iconography a form of local myth.

When members of the Border Arts Workshop/Taller de Arte Fronterizo, or BAWTAF, stage low-tech, participatory performances for and in the "Soccer Field" - a barren staging ground from which undocumented workers cross daily into the U.S., and which doubles as a kind of public square for the residents of Colonia Libertad, Tijuana's oldest neighborhood - they intend to intervene in the prevailing U.S. media characterizations of the border as a "war zone" by engaging and making visible the human and community dimensions of this dusty geo-political pass. Designed to be passed through at dusk, when the migrants move north, these "performance interventions" do not "capture" an audience, but seek to acknowledge the more pressing social currents by which their undocumented constituents move. The image is not one of art becoming life, but of life passing through art as a function of place.

When David Ireland sandblasts layers of paint and plaster from the walls of a former Army barracks that is now the Headlands Center for the Arts, he suspends the architecture in a moment of physical time that spans its entire history as a place. By revealing layer after layer of the building - old wooden door jambs, steel weight-bearing poles that aren't quite hidden by the walls, and places where windows used to be - he interprets the site in terms of the intentions, decisions, and sometimes the indecision that maintained it for most of this century. With a kind of memorial empathy, Ireland uncovers a sense of the place's inner life, and of the lives of those who passed through it.

When Buster Simpson uses a floor joist from a long-destroyed Seattle hotel as the bench for a bus stop that overlooks the hotel's original site, and when he inscribes in that bench the phrase, An old hotel demolished here - *only this floor joist remains to bear your wait,* he not only recycles an artifact of

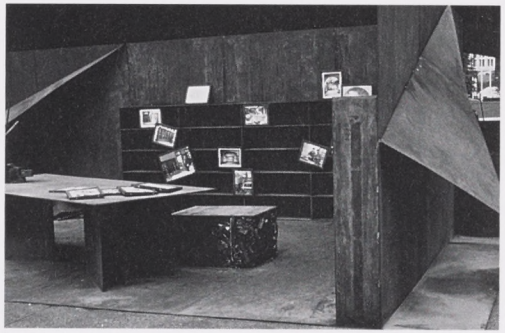
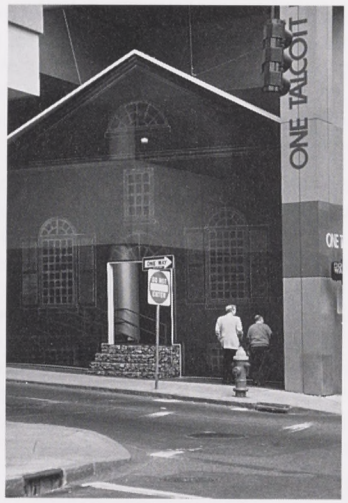


Table of Contents, Reynolds & Helmuth



Talcott Street Church, Mel Chin

Border Arts Workshop

history in its place, but he also creates a powerful mnemonic device in which one "remembers" through the seat of one's pants. Here, social memory is borne in one's weight.

When, as part of Pittsburgh's annual Three Rivers Festival, Suzanne Helmuth and Jock Reynolds install "Table of Contents" - an open, rusty steel replica of the 19th century "children's room" of the Braddock Carnegie Library - they honor a process of local urban renewal in which the nearby city of Braddock, economically depressed since the decline of the steel industry in the seventies, has embarked on a grass-roots renovation of its famous library, the first of hundreds given to communities throughout the nation by Andrew Carnegie. By welding into the sculpture steel-framed photographs that were either taken of the renovation process or researched from the library archives, the artists were able to incorporate into their work a collage-like record of civic and social change in Braddock, a city symptomatic of what ails the "rust belt." And also of what heals it: as part of this public period room, volunteers from Braddock were invited to sit and tell festival-goers about their community's renewal, transforming the art, as it were, into a stage for the oral transmission of local history.

When Mel Chin installs a black nylon scrim that replicates the pitched-roof facade of Hartford's 19th century Talcott Street Church on its original site (presently occupied by an office building/parking garage), he resurrects not only the ghostly visage and diminutive scale of the old building, but, because the church was home to Connecticut's first black congregation, a regional cornerstone of the Abolitionist movement (with ties to the Underground Railroad), and a vital community center, he also invokes a screen of collective, if faded, memories of a once thriving place and the layers of racial, social, and political identity that gave it meaning and coherence, but which have since been fractured and lost, like so many American stories, within a labyrinth of modern urban "renewal."

In each of these approaches to place, art is reconceived as a tool by which some half forgotten layer of our public life is unearthed. Underlying this archaeological tendency is a broad transformation in the sixties and seventies of our perception of the spaces of art from those of negative presence to those of particular place. It runs from minimalism to earthworks to specific sites, and is intersected along the way by feminist theory and practice - which means that the perceptual theater of common materials and the cosmic drama of remote sites were humanized and socialized by the personal content and political methods of feminist artists. In that time, site-specific art has been transformed into a place-particular practice that defines approaches to art-making in which

the social and cultural contents of places are acknowledged and worked as the materials of human exchange. And to acknowledge the contents of a place is to move beyond what Robert Morris called the "solipsism" of the senses and into a more concrete (and politically complex) relationship with those whose place it is. Therein, the abstractions of art are literalized: viewers become constituents, art history gives way to local memory, and public opinions about art are suddenly less important than community values about place.

Body Politics

While the influence of feminism on our notions of site and place has been complex, it is possible to generalize that with the womens' movement came an embrace of the body, and especially the female body, as a site for connection with the earth, for cycles of time and change, for memory as history, and for conflicts within the "body politic." Rather than "clearing the site" and mapping perception in terms of the projection of mental space through industrial force, feminist (and feminist-influenced) artists began to cultivate places for the body, including chambers, wells, circles, tunnels, paths, and pits. Therein lay the places of ritual, memory, reclamation, and recovery, and between them lay a social ground. Which means that what began in the sixties as a material seepage beyond the gallery system has returned to the cities in the eighties and nineties as a social engagement with the political system, or what might now be called a postmodern social realism.

Reclamations

It would be wrong to suggest, however, that an emerging consciousness of place among artists represents a "progression" for art. While a certain opening-up of the art site (from the dense pictorialism of late-modernist sculpture to the fluid social-realism of actual places) can be described in general and in retrospect, it probably has more to do with the social reclamation of artists than with the esthetic progress of art. The linear arc of modernism has not been grounded in the human-scale particularities of time and place, and it is in a more "vertical" sense that artists have begun to excavate and interpret the strata of personal and social memory that constitute places, finding therein places for themselves outside the specialized social sites of art.

Art-like, art "like"

A place comes into art loaded with contents. An artist comes to a place in one of two ways: either loaded with contents or, like a "clean slate," ready to receive, interpret, and represent what is already there. If the former, an artist will displace the resident meanings of a place with his preconceptions about art. If the latter, she will make those meanings visible, as if for the first time. In so doing, she may also make something that bears little resemblance to art: it may look like beach furniture, feel like a walking tour, sound like oral history, pass by like a parade, or be organized like a photography competition.

Having been made by an artist, however, it will be none of these things alone. It will be art without necessarily being "art-like." It will be art "like" something else: like architecture, like street life, like urban design, like social research, like outdoor advertising, like memorials, like graffiti, like archival photography, like turn-of-the-century graveyards for the stillborn infants of unwed mothers. But to be like something is to be once removed from the thing itself, to have a kind of double life, which means that a place will be both the content and the context of an art of place. As contexts for art, places will reveal the practical, non-elitist dimensions of postmodernism.

Dowsing

In place, artists engage meanings that may have nothing to do with art, but which are framed, proposed, or clarified in the engagement. Like archaeologists, contemporary placemakers excavate the accumulated history and character of a place; like anthropologists, they study the institutions, myths, and customs that characterize a place; like psychotherapists, they unlock the unconscious assumptions and forgotten secrets that keep a place's histories and intentions hidden from public view; like witches or magicians, they invoke the rhythms and spirits of a place; like sociologists, they measure the social systems that give a place its power; and like social activists, artists of place confront the rhetorics of exclusion and power that keep certain places off limits to dissenting voices. Which means that, as the millennium approaches, the thresholds now before us are fundamentally political: metaphors for access and belonging, for empowerment and remembering. Under the weight of these analogies, though, a placemaker is as much a dowser as anything else.

Presented at Headlands, September 1989

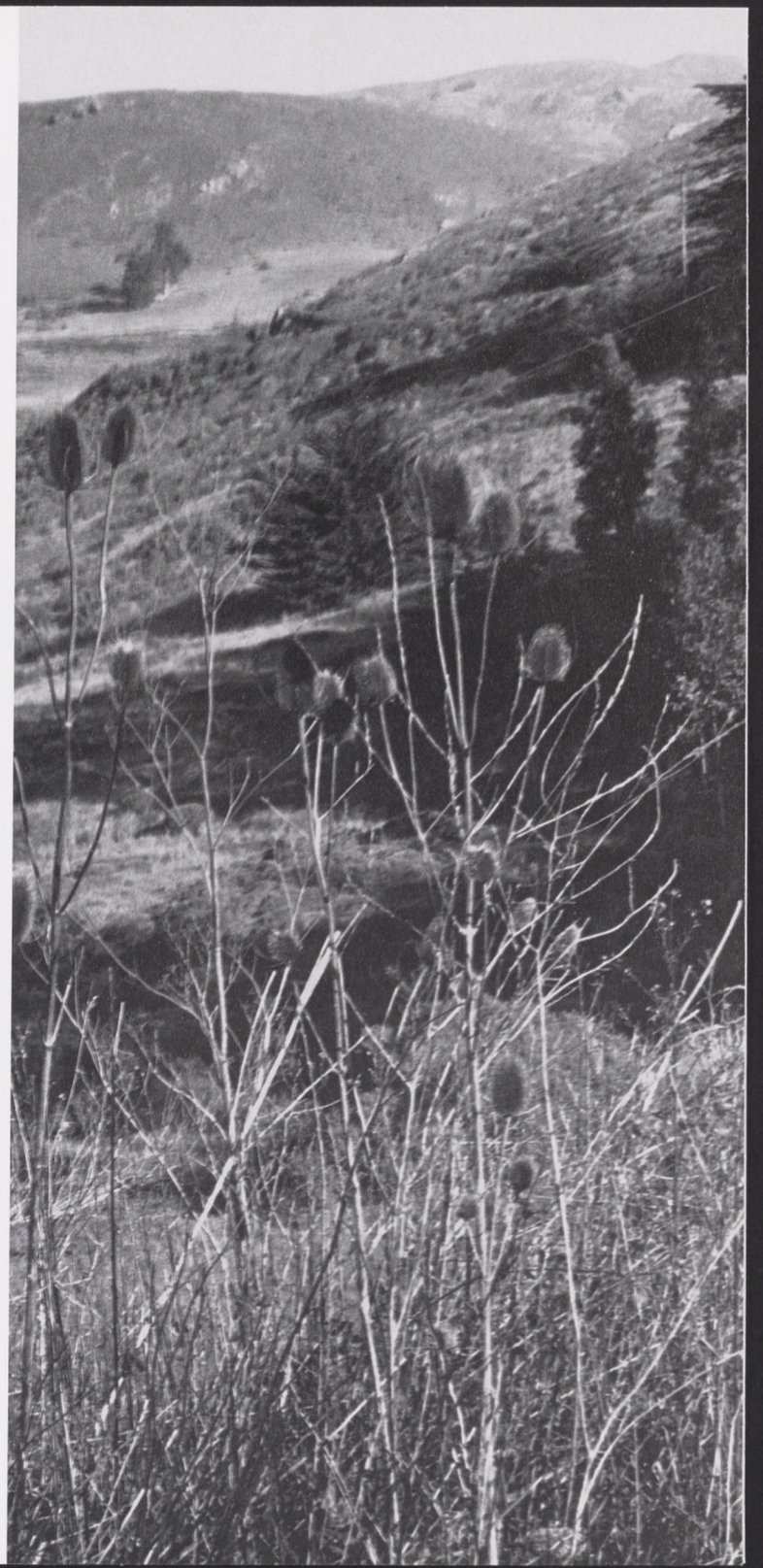
How to Give

How to give you
this yellow paper-towel
fluttering in the sun,
to give you the blue ceramic cup
hot with coffee,
the simmering tomato sauce,
its dark scent tinting the room,
or the grater resting on edge
in the porcelain sink,
waxy bits of lemon rind in its teeth,
or the wildflowers called Farewell-to-Spring,
purple opening to more fullness
each day until they are gone,
and the spring is gone?

The window's light curves
on the bowl of the peppermill.
Gradually we are losing our monuments,
Stonehenge fenced off,
the Parthenon etched with acid soot,
while their images flicker & fade
to a blue light glimpsed at evening's end.

The only life to be had
starts here: without seams,
this daily life a coming ordinariness,
a mine to replace the chameleon
history of power,
a power to replace that other power—
things shining, & things growing dark,
loud with crickets,
with bees,
the patina of use, the habit of care.

By Jane Hirshfield
Presented at Headlands, Fall 1986



GUILLERMO GÓMEZ PEÑA:

The Multicultural Paradigm

It's 1989 in this troubled continent accidentally called America. A major paradigm shift is taking place in front of our very eyes. The East Coast/West Coast cultural axis is being replaced by a North/South one. The need of U.S. culture to come to terms with the Latino-American "cultural other" has become a national debate.

To look South means to remember, to recapture one's historical self. For the U.S., this historical self extends from the early Native American cultures to the most recent immigration from Laos or Guatemala.

It's 1989 in this troubled country mistakenly called America. The current Latino and Asian immigration to the U.S. is the direct result of international conflicts between the so-called "First" and "Third Worlds." The colonized cultures are sliding into the space of the colonizer, and in doing so, they are redefining its borders and its culture.

The First and Third Worlds have mutually penetrated one another. The two Americas are totally intertwined. The complex demographic, social and linguistic processes that are transforming this country into a member of the "Second World" (or perhaps Fourth World?), are being reflected in the art and thought produced by Latinos, Blacks, Asians, Native Americans and Anglo-Europeans. Unlike the images on television or in commercial cinema depicting a monocultural middle-class world existing outside of international crises, contemporary U.S. society is fundamentally multicultural, multilingual and socially polarized. So is its art.

Whenever and wherever two or more cultures meet - peacefully or violently - there is a border experience.

In order to describe the trans-, inter- and multicultural processes that are at the core of our contemporary border experience as Latino artists in the U.S., we need to find a new terminology, a new iconography and a new set of categories and definitions. We need to re-baptize the world in our own terms. Terms like "Hispanic," "Latino," "ethnic minority," "marginal," "alternative," and "Third World," among others, are inaccurate and loaded with ideological implications. They create categories and hierarchies that promote political dependence and cultural undetermination. In the absence of a more enlightened terminology, we have no choice but to utilize them with extreme care.

My artistic sensibility as a deterritorialized Mexican/American artist living a permanent border experience cannot be explained solely by accepted historical notions of the 20th century Western vanguard (from Dada to techno-performance). I am as Western and American as Laurie Anderson or Terry Allen. Yet my primary traditions are Chicano and Latin American art, literature and political thought. We must realize that the West has been redefined. The South and the East are already in the West. And being American today means participating in the drafting of a new cultural topography.

America is a continent, not a country. Latin America encompasses more than half of America. Mixtecos and Iroquois are American (not U.S. citizens) Mexicans and Canadians are also North Americans. Newly arrived Vietnamese and Laotians will soon become Americans. U.S. Anglo-European culture is but a mere component of a much larger cultural complex in constant metamorphosis.

Despite the great cultural mirage sponsored by the people in power, everywhere we look we find pluralism, crises and non-synchronicity. The so-called dominant culture is no longer dominant. Dominant culture is a meta-reality that only exists in the virtual space of the mainstream media and in the ideologically and aesthetically-controlled spaces of the more established cultural institutions.

Today, if there is a dominant culture, it is border culture. And those who still haven't crossed a border will do it very soon. All Americans (from the vast continent America) were, are or will be border crossers. "All Mexicans," says Tomas Ybarra-Frausto," are potential Chicanos." As you read this text, you are crossing a border yourself.

Intercultural Dialog

The social and ethnic fabric of the U.S. is filled with interstitial wounds, invisible to those who didn't experience the events that generated them, or who are victimized by historical amnesia. The territory of intercultural dialog is abrupt and labyrinthine. It is filled with geysers and cracks; with intolerant ghosts and invisible walls. Anglo-Americans are filled with stereotypical notions about Latinos and Latino-American art. Latin Americans are exaggeratedly distrustful of initiatives toward bi-national dialog coming from this side/el otro lado. Bicultural Latinos in the U.S. (be they Chicanos, Nuyorricans or others) and monocultural citizens of Latin America have a hard time getting along. This conflict represents one of the most painful border wounds; a wound in the middle of a family, a bitter split between two lovers from the same hometown.

Fear is the sign of the times. The '80s are the culture of fear. Everywhere I go, I meet Anglo-Americans immersed in fear. They are scared of us, the other, taking over "their country," their jobs, their neighborhoods, their universities, their art world. To "them," "we" are a whole package that includes an indistinct Spanish language, weird art, gang activity, drugs, "illegal aliens" and potential terrorism. They don't realize that their fear has been implanted as a form of political control; that this fear is the very source of the endemic violence that has been affecting this society.

Border culture can help dismantle the mechanisms of fear. Border culture can guide us back to common ground and improve our negotiating skills. Border culture is a process of negotiation towards utopia, but in this case, utopia means peaceful coexistence and fruitful cooperation. The border is all we share. La Frontera es lo unico que compartimos.

In 1989, we must realize that all cultures are open systems in constant process of transformation, redefinition and recontexualization. What we need is dialog, not protection. In fact, the only way to regenerate identity and culture is through ongoing dialog with the other.

Then, the question is, what does dialog mean? Some thought in this respect: "Dialog is a two-way ongoing communication between peoples and communities that enjoy equal negotiating powers."

Dialog is a micro-universal expression of international cooperation. When it is effective, we recognize ourselves in the other and realize we don't have to fear.

Dialog has never existed between the First and Third Worlds. We must not confuse dialog with neo-colonialism, paternalism, vampirism, tokenism or appropriation.

Dialog is the opposite of national security, neighborhood watch, racial paranoia, aesthetic protectionism, sentimental nationalism, ethnocentrism and monolinguality.

In order to dialog, we must learn each other's language, history, art, literature and political ideas. We must travel South and East, with frequency and humility, not as cultural tourists but as civilian ambassadors.

Only through dialog can we develop models of coexistence and cooperation. Only through an ongoing public dialog in the form of publications, conferences and collaborative intercultural art and media projects, can the wound effectively heal. It will be a long process. It might take 30-50 years. We cannot undo centuries of cultural indifference, domination and racism overnight. All we can aspire to is beginning a dialog. This document is a humble contribution. I ask you to join in.

Excerpts from an *Open Letter to the National Arts Community*. Presented at Headlands, August 16, 1989

PETER NABOKOV: Fragment 2

We had put up the canvas tipi, eighteen lofty feet of it, that afternoon. We'd soaked within the wigwam-framed sweat lodge nearby at dusk, and after a meal of buffalo hearts, potato salad, chokecherry pudding and Kool Aid, we had settled in for some cozy firelight chatter. And then the storm which had been grumbling and glowering in the west broke upon us.

Earlier, we'd visited a clan origin site in that direction, a sequestered and solitary butte whose ancient unkemptness stood out among the plowed fields and irrigation rosettes that surrounded it. Right then one of our host's buddies was fasting for four days and nights up there, seeking his vision, and as the thunder grew a tad louder and the electric flickers accelerated, he joked that some old score was getting settled.

It struck like an exploding fist. Lightning slashed at the tipi cover so deafeningly loud it seemed the cracks would split the canvas. Gusts of wind collided against the walls as if someone was using them for batting practice. You could practically watch the cold air bully itself under the stretched skirt of the building and surge towards the smokehole, turning the fire crazy and the smoke frantic. Cold water spilled in sheets through the ground stakes which began popping out, threatening to make rafts of our sleeping bags. The willow pins lacing the cover began writhing out of their holes and overhead the smokeflaps snapped like torn sails. I imagined us all becoming New Age Dorothys pretty quick, trapped in a wet bundle of shredded canvas and splintered lodge poles, lifting over the North Dakota Badlands towards some furious cougar of a storm cloud which was drawing us into its cold damp fur with huge dark paws.

To be honest, we were all of us playing old-timey Indians for a week, and in the process a few homemaking hints had been overlooked. Perhaps that's why the powers-that-be decided to slap us around a bit. Now our Native host turned Indian real quick, ordering us to dig out a horseshoe-shaped ditch around the upper slope while he grabbed an axe and sharpened two chunks of firewood the length of my forearm. As we shoveled madly in the horizontal rain, the Coleman-illuminated tipi looked ghostly against the violent night - such a fragile beacon of culture. It's times like these you get scared for all mankind. The real odds seem so clear. All we can do, it seems, is dig that ditch, hug that ground, pray, and wish we'd had the good sense to tie our house to the ground.

When we lurched inside, our host was pounding one stake inch by inch into the ground just behind the firepit, keeping it angled until a good foot was buried. Crossing it with another stake sunk equally deep, he reached for the rope which secured the nexus of poles whose end was tucked behind a tipi pole. Our combined weight quickly hung on it like sailors dropping a mainsail in a typhoon. As the rope hummed taut, he lashed it to the crossed stakes, knotting it securely - literally anchoring the structure from its neck down to its heart in the earth. At last - architecture tied to site, cooked balanced to raw, culture negotiated with nature. I felt that house grinning at us.

Fragment 2, *Tying Your House to the Ground.* Presented at Headlands, June 10, 1989

PAULA GUNN ALLEN: Special Problems

I want to make a few comments about the classroom use of sacred materials. Maybe a good place to start is at the point a tv commercial calls "book smart" thence to what the same commercial terms "street smart." If we are "book smart," we will define sacred and if we are street smart, we check out the lay of the land. For the purposes of this discussion, I'm taking sacred to refer to any material that is drawn from ritual and myth. This definition might extend to include little stories that are told to children and it certainly includes the most arcane information that can be culled from a variety of scholarly or Native sources.

Street smart is fairly simple in the commercial, but it's a bit more complicated in a university setting. It's easy enough to discern the lay of the land from a white professor's point of view and teach ethically in the best academic tradition, unworried about treading on sacred ground. Ethically, a professor is responsible for providing students with the most complete coherent information available. In teaching Native American literature, providing the best information includes drawing from ritual and mythic sources that have bearing on the text under consideration. Teaching a Native text without recourse to ethnographic as well as historical glossing is an exercise in obscurity, because texts either derived from or directly connected to tradition are firmly embedded within the matrix of their cultural base. But to use the oral tradition directly is to run afoul of Native ethics which is itself a considerable part of the tradition. Using the tradition while contravening it is to do violence to it. The ethical issue is both political and metaphysical and to violate the tradition is to run risks that no university professor signed up for in any case.

The protectiveness of Native people, particularly Pueblos, toward their traditions is legendary, but the reasons for that protectiveness are perhaps not so well known. Among the Pueblos, a person is expected to know no more than is necessary, sufficient and congruent with their spiritual and social place. One does not tell or inquire about matters that do not directly concern one. I was raised to understand that "street smart" around Laguna meant respecting privacy and modesty, and that to step beyond the bounds of the required propriety was to put myself and others at risk. One did not inquire about or tell about matters that were not hers or his to know or discuss. As my grandmother deftly phrased the requirements, one was to mind her p's and q's as well as her own beeswax.

Recently, I discovered that the sense of propriety I was taught is not confined to Lagunas or even the Pueblo world. As recorded in *Survival This Way*, Ray Young Bear tells about a similar experience he had that taught him the lay of the land in the midwest. The distinction that was made by [Young Bear's] contacts was pretty much the same across the board. "If it's ours, it's not for sale." He also discovered that what was told to a white ethnographer is not to be re-told lest tragic consequences ensue. Preserving tradition in print is not worth the price.

Preserving tradition with the sacrifice of its living bearers seems at best reasonless, at worst blasphemous. If people die as a result of preserving tradition in the white way of preservation, for whom will the tradition be preserved?

Barre Toelken comments in *Recovering the Word*, "The Navajos believe that language does not merely describe reality, it creates it. Since words and narratives have power to heal, they may also be used to injure and kill. The selection of certain parts of the coyote narratives for incorporation into "witch's rituals, instead of integrating the story with a model of order and restoration," incorporates it into a structure modeled on disorder by using the elements "separately, divisively, and analytically."

In the white world, information is to be saved and analyzed at all costs. It is not seen as residing in the minds and molecules of human beings, but as - dare I say it? - transcendent. Civilization and its attendant virtues of freedom and primacy depend on the accessibility of millions of megabytes of data; no matter that the data has lost its meaning by virtue of loss of its human context. Yet traditional materials, sacred or social, have meaning within the traditional, day to day context of the people who live within it.

I am a breed. I have even less reason to honor the traditions and heed the references I've been given. And I suppose that, valuing my career and my job - which is a very good one - I have even less reason to honor the Laguna way.

But childhood learning dies hard. In the classroom, or before the keyboard, I find myself physically ill when I attempt to override those early lessons. My body, breed as it is, rebels against the very idea that such violations might proceed from me. I have specialized in teaching contemporary literature to avoid as many ethical violations as I could, believing that I might teach it and evade or avoid queries about arcane matters. By and large I have succeeded in doing so, giving a few generalized lectures on Native spiritual systems and avoiding discussing any in particular detail. I have gone so far as to learn as little ritual or myth as

possible in any particular detail to further buttress my defense against ethical violations.

But satisfying my ethical concerns poses a serious ethical problem: pedagogically, I believe I should give specific information to students. Ethically, as a professor, I see this kind of methodology as necessary; but ethically, as an Indian, I can't do it. Contemplating my dilemma in cold hard prose here, I begin to despair; no, I begin to understand some of the reasons for my extreme ambivalence in doing what I do, some of the reasons I find teaching in Native American Studies so painful, and some of the reasons why some of the poems and fiction I've been working on for years is stymied.

At this point I don't have any solutions or resolutions in mind. Sadly - and frustratingly - a human life isn't a tv commercial or a novel. It seldom structures itself along classical lines of conflict, crisis and resolution. Probably I will continue to teach and write, more aware of the source of my conflict, perhaps more able to render that conflict articulate. I think I will feel more secure about my tendency to fail at my professorial responsibilities by choosing my Native obligations over my academic ones, and find more precise ways to teach away from forbidden territory while illuminating the texts in more prosaic, less titillating ways. Perhaps my students will find themselves ever more aware that Native people are people, and their ways are not a spectacle, but simply and significantly a way of life.

Excerpts from *Special Problems in Teaching Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony*. Paula Gunn Allen, at Headlands, August 23, 1989

Pomo Dancers performing at
Intonations of the Earth, July 1990

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